



**COPING WP3 (STAKEHOLDER AND CAREGIVER CONSULTATION)
STAKEHOLDER GROUP: PRISON STAFF INVOLVED WITH FAMILY
CONTACT**

This document gives supplementary guidance on the stakeholder consultations that form WP3 of the COPING project. It should be used together with the general WP3 Stakeholder Consultation Guide and is not useable as a standalone document. It provides additional guidance on how to conduct consultations with prison staff involved with family contact, as well as question schedules for interviews and focus groups.

ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Stakeholder type: Information provider

Areas of presumed knowledge: Visits, other contact, impact on imprisoned parents

Additional issues – before consultation

Problems of ‘gatekeeping’ may occur, with managers being involved in identifying research participants. Refer to general consultation guide for suggestions on resolving this.

Location and timing of consultations. Prison staff may be busy with limited time for participation, and/or need to meet within the prison, and/or be called away mid-consultation to deal with an emergency. Be prepared to be flexible and to negotiate ways of conducting the consultation, including by telephone interview or sending/receiving questions by email.

Entry restrictions. You may need to apply for specific permission to enter prisons; check with individual prisons what is needed and how long the process takes.

Ethical approval may be required from prison authorities. Refer to general consultation guide and clarify whether different prisons need separate approval processes, and whether a single process will cover all consultation and stakeholder types.

Consultation and recording restrictions. Recording equipment is frequently banned in prisons; check this beforehand and ensure that multiple researchers are involved if you need to make written notes. There may also be restrictions on what prison staff are allowed to talk about. In such cases, try to obtain an answer (with assurances that consent can be removed later) or at least an explanation of why this is an issue that can't be discussed.

Additional issues – during consultation

Participants may lack detailed knowledge of children of prisoners, because their main role is working with prisoners and facilitating access between families. This is addressed in the question schedules below.

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Supplementary consultation guide – prison staff

Additional issues – after consultation

None foreseen.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introductory questions

1. **Can you tell us your name and a little bit about your job?**
2. **What involvement do you have with children of prisoners?**
Supplementary questions: Do you work directly with prisoners' children?
Indirectly?

Core questions

3. **In your experience, what do you think are the needs of children of imprisoned parents?**
Supplementary questions: How are their needs different from those of other children you have come across? Why do you think this is?
4. **Are there any parts of their lives where they have particular needs?**
Supplementary questions: What are their needs in relation to visits? Do they need help booking a visit? Accompaniment? What kind of support do they need before, during and after seeing their imprisoned parent? What are their needs in relation to other forms of contact with their imprisoned parent? Family relations? School/education? Free time? What are their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
5. **What is different for the child after a parent is imprisoned? How do the child's needs change? Why do you think this is?**
6. **What kind of personal strength/resilience helps children manage when a parent is in prison?**
Supplementary questions: Are there things they do to make themselves feel better about having a parent in prison? How helpful do you think these things are? Do they change when they have a parent in prison? How? Why? Are there things they find positive about having a parent in prison? What things?
7. **What support or help do you know of for children of prisoners?**
Supplementary questions: What help is there for visiting imprisoned parents? What facilities for children are available at prison visits? What help is available for keeping in contact? Supporting the family? Education? Free time? What support is available for children's emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
8. **Who provides this support? How does the support available differ from child to child? Why do you think it differs?**
Supplementary questions: Do other family members provide support? The imprisoned parent? Friends? Teachers? Social workers? NGOs?

Prison/criminal justice officials? What kind of support do you give? Who do children tell/talk to about having a parent in prison? Why do they talk to these people?

9. In which areas of children's lives can they get most help? Why do you think this is?

Supplementary questions: Is there help for them in relation to visits? Other forms of contact with the imprisoned parent? Relationships with other family members? School/education? Free time? Is there support for their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?

10. Do you have any idea about how well the different types of support and programmes work? What is good and what is bad about them?

Supplementary questions: What would you change to make them better?

11. How much does the criminal justice system consider prisoners' children and their needs?

Supplementary questions: Do different parts of the criminal justice system consider their needs differently? Do police consider it? Courts? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? Which aspects of the children's needs do they consider? What do they miss? Why do you think this is?

12. What does the criminal justice system do to support children of prisoners and their needs?

Supplementary questions: What do they do that's good/positive for children of prisoners? What do they do that's bad? How do their actions affect the children's emotions? Physical and mental health? Finances?

13. What do you recommend to make sure that the needs of children of prisoners are met? Recommendations can relate to changes in policy, practice, or attitude.

Supplementary questions: What changes can the police make to meet the needs of children of prisoners? What changes can courts make? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? NGOs? Social workers? Schools? Families? The imprisoned parent? Other children? In your experience, what things have worked best to change policy or make things better for the children? Why do you think this is?

14. What one/three things should change to better support children of prisoners?

Supplementary questions: What would help improve the emotional needs of children of prisoners? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs? Is there anything that you would like to do differently?

15. When should children be involved in research like this?

Supplementary questions: Is it important for researchers to hear about what children have to say about the impact of prison? Why/why not? What are the benefits of including children in this research? What things need to be in place to make it okay for children to participate? Do you have any experience of children being in this kind of research? Can you tell us about it/give details?

Final question

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

Initial/opening questions

- 1. Can you all tell us who you are and what your job is?**
- 2. What involvement do you have with children of prisoners?**

Core questions

- 3. What do you think are the needs of children of imprisoned parents?**
Prompts: What are their needs in relation to visits? Contact with imprisoned parent? Family relations? School/education? Free time? What are their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 4. What interventions and support exist to meet these needs?**
Prompts: Can you give an example of something that works well? Something that works badly? What support do social workers give? What help is there for visiting? Keeping in contact? Supporting the family? Education? Free time? What support is available for their emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 5. How much does the criminal justice system consider and support the needs of children of prisoners?**
Prompts: How much do police consider their needs? Courts? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? Are there things they do well relating to children of prisoners? Things they do badly? How do their actions affect the children's emotional needs? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs?
- 6. What do you recommend to make sure that the needs of children of prisoners are met?**
Prompts: What one/three things should change to better support children of prisoners? What would help improve the emotional needs of children of prisoners? Physical and mental health needs? Financial needs? Is there anything that you would like to do differently? What changes can the police make to meet the needs of children of prisoners? What changes can courts make? Judges? Prison staff? Probation officers? NGOs? Social workers? Schools? Families? The imprisoned parent? Other children?
- 7. When should children be involved in research like this?**
Prompts: Is it important for researchers to hear about what children have to say about the impact of prison? Why/why not? What are the benefits of including children in this research? What things need to be in place to make it okay for children to participate? Do you have any experience of

children being in this kind of research? Can you tell us about it/give details?

Final question

8. Is there anything else you would like to add?