

# Services For Education

## DSL DISCUSSIONS- CHILDREN WITH A PARENT IN PRISON

### Raising the topic...

Discussing children with parents in prison can be tricky as there is not just an impact on the child, but on the family and their situation as a whole.

Children who have a parent in prison can feel isolated and ashamed - many will feel a sense of loss or bereavement- even if that parent not being around actually improves their home life.

They're also more likely than other children to have mental health problems and to get in trouble with the law themselves as they grow up.

Firstly, how do you share that information once you know it? All staff members working with the child/ children in question need to know the situation and how that child is coping. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis and supportive actions and strategies should be made clear to everyone.

### Questions to discuss...

- How might children with parents in prison feel?
- Why will these emotions differ from child to child?
- How might a child's life change once the parent goes to prison?
- How might this impact their home and school life?
- Is the child visiting the incarcerated parent - what impact might this have?
- How can you best support the child with this?
- Some children want their parent to stay in prison, how can we support them with the feelings surrounding this?
- Having a parent in prison counts as an 'Adverse Childhood Experience' (ACE)- how can you have a trauma informed approach in your setting to help minimise the impact of this?

### What can you do?

**Open communication:** Children will need time to talk and share how they feel without judgement.

**Prioritise stability:** Support children by providing structure and stability at school, as home life may feel chaotic and unstable. Routine, consistency and boundaries are key.

**Work with the whole family:** A parent in prison does not only impact the child- but the whole family will also need support and should be included in work completed with the child.

**Allow the child to grieve:** Children may experience bereavement type feelings and feel a sense of loss- they will need time to process and be able to talk about how they feel.

**Signpost:** There are lots of organisations out there who support families involved with the prison system- have these details to hand to share with parents, families and older children.

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- Or want guidance with auditing your procedures and practices?

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[safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk)