

**Cross-Party Group on Children and Families
Affected by Imprisonment
Wednesday 11 June 2014
1-2pm**

Attendance: Nancy Loucks, Mary Fee, Richard Simpson, Richard Lyle Janice McGowan, Tim Parkinson, Fiona Barlow, Mark Ballard, Nicki Wray, Rosie McCabe, Don Millar, Donny Scott, Fiona Marks, Fiona Jameson, Carol Robinson, Kathleen Bryson, Susan Galloway, Georgina Lyttle, Nicola Birrell, Alan Robertson, Margaret Slater

Apologies: Oliver Aldridge, Jennifer Graham, Ann Darlington, Sue Maxwell, Irene Kitson, Christine Baird, Sara Watkin, Justina Murray, Valarie MacNiven, Anne Pinkman

Welcome and apologies	Action
Mr Lyle MSP welcomed those in attendance. Apologies were noted prior to the meeting and were not read out.	
Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Action
Note of previous meeting was agreed.	
Nancy confirmed that the planning group met in May. Future dates and provisional topics have been circulated to all members.	
Update on Parliamentary Business	Action
Ms Fee informed the group that she had recently attended the Samaritans' Listening service event at Barlinnie prison. Ms Fee noted that she learned a lot about the service and spent time speaking to two Listeners, hearing what lead them to becoming Listeners and how it benefited them. Ms Fee also spoke with David Strang, the new Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, and Mr Colin McConnell, both of whom are happy to present to the group in future.	
Presentation and discussion: "All Babies Count: Babies affected by the Criminal Justice System."	Action
<p>Susan Galloway from NSPCC gave a short presentation on the findings from NSPCC's recent research project on babies affected by the criminal justice system. Susan informed the group that the report would be published in September.</p> <p>Susan explained that the under-1s age group is a priority for the NSPCC, as pregnancy and infancy lay the foundations for life. Susan noted that the caregiver relationship is critical in the first few weeks of life. It's very important for babies that mothers have good maternal physical and mental health during pregnancy, as the antenatal period is important for mother and baby bonding. After childbirth, there is a need for sensitive, responsive, consistent care from caregivers during infancy for an infant's emotional, social, and cognitive development. All babies need a stimulating environment to live in order to thrive. Parents need be supported effectively to cope with the challenges of looking after infant.</p> <p>The purpose of the research therefore, was to explore the ways in which a parent's involvement in the criminal justice system might affect a baby's start in life. Susan firstly noted that the criminal justice system itself can, and very often does, affect the relationship between parents and babies and parents and children. Secondly, parents involved in the criminal justice are already at the very sharp end of health inequalities in society. Thirdly, there are already very strong public policy in Scotland around these issues, including GIRFEC and a national policy to reduce health inequalities. The National Parenting Strategy also acknowledges the needs of parents in custody. There is also a strong commitment from government to infant mental health. In sum, there are policies in place. The aim of the NSPCC research was to look at the interface between perinatal health services and criminal justice services in prison and in the community.</p> <p>Susan informed the group that the starkest finding from the research was the little attention there has been on this issue. Susan noted that there wasn't a lot of publicly joined-up thinking, which meant there are still many questions that need answered and a lot of gaps in knowledge that need to be filled in order to be confident that the needs of babies are being met. Susan informed the group that there is a lack of basic information on the numbers of pregnant and postpartum women in the criminal justice system. We don't know how many children are affected by parental imprisonment and what the care arrangements are for children. Data is not collected (in England) on the number of births there are in prison or the number of women receiving antenatal care in</p>	

prison. Susan suggested that this is the type of data we should be collecting in order to meet the terms of the Bangkok Rules on the Treatment of Women Prisoners. Other areas where basic information is lacking include: the extent to which parenting interventions in prison focus on babies and infant mental health and on attachment and bonding. In the community, universal services do not routinely collect or record how many babies have parents in the CJS.

Susan noted that babies may be affected in different ways and at different points in the parent's journey through the CJS, depending on: which parent is in prison, what other issues are ongoing in the parents' lives, the prior attachment infants had, as well as the type of care arrangements they are in.

Susan informed the group that there isn't a UK evidence base on which to inform policy and practice on Mother and Baby Units. The only UK study which compared outcomes for babies in mother and baby units with other care arrangements was published in 1992. There has been no other study published since. Susan suggested a need for a study to track outcomes for babies in different care arrangements, including mother and baby units, to know what the best conditions are for mothers and babies and if mother and baby units met these conditions.

Susan noted that there is a huge gap in knowledge around separation and loss for this group. The majority of women and babies are separated, yet there is still little knowledge about the consequence for this on babies' development. Susan suggested that we do know separation can have a negative effect on the women, but we don't know how well women are being supported in terms of the therapeutic intervention they may need. Susan suggested this is the same for women who are left outside to care for children - are these women being identified and supported? There are also issues around reunification and whether mothers and babies are receiving support upon release. Susan suggested that the systematic provision of joined-up parenting support post-release is an area that needs further investigation. There is also a need to look at how criminal justice systems and community children's health services communicate and match together.

Research in perinatal health care services in English prisons have found that provision varies widely and that prison rules and cultures have a large bearing on what is available and how services were provided. Many issues were reported which raised questions about the equivalence of health care for women in prisons compared to those in the community. Susan noted that the transfer from prison health care to the NHS in 2011 presented an opportunity to join up community and prison healthcare in the perinatal period and to really tackle the huge inequalities for women in prison. Susan suggested that more research looks at what (if any) improvements have come from the transfer.

In terms of children's policy, Susan confirmed that the Named Person for babies and pregnant women in prison would be the prison governor. Susan suggested there was a need to look at what the Guidance needs to say in terms of their responsibilities and whether we can improve on what is already set out in prison regulations.

Susan also suggested that information sharing could be improved for this group of children. She noted that it will now be a responsibility to share information about a child with the Named Person if it is considered relevant. Susan suggested this might have implications for the criminal justice system and their responsibility to be aware and identify individuals' parental status, pregnant women and individuals with mental health problems, and to alert midwives and health practitioners to that information.

Susan queried whether there needed to be a national action plan to set out what improvements need to be made across agencies to help address the needs of babies affected by imprisonment.

Mark Ballard asked if there were any difference in policies with regard to Mother and Baby units across the four nations. Mark also suggested that there was an opportunity to use Part 3 of the Children and Young People Bill to push local joint children services to recognise the distinct needs of children affected by parental imprisonment and asked Susan's thoughts on this.

Susan responded that the only scoping study looking at this issue had been in England with no comparative studies conducted elsewhere in the UK. She suggested that a lot of the issues seem to be common across the UK with differences being found between prisons rather than across nations. Susan suggested leadership, commitment, and interest from prison staff and local health services were influencing factors in service delivery. Susan agreed with Mark's second point regarding Part 3 of the Bill [now Act].

Donny Scott suggested that the Early Years Collaborative, which has pressurised targets to improve the health and wellbeing of preschool children, may not have fully recognised the needs of this population. Donny suggested that this may be an opportunity for the Early Years Collaboratives to focus on this group.

Richard Lyle suggested that these points should be raised through Parliamentary Questions.

Susan informed the group that the Early Years Collaboratives were aiming to conduct some research with the prison service.

Richard Simpson reflected that progress has been made with regard to women and babies in prison but noted that attitudes within the prison change depending on who governs the prison. Richard suggested that he was still concerned about the lack of attention paid to women coming in to prison who have recently given birth and are separated from their children. He suggested it would be worth posing questions to the Early Years Collaboratives.

Mark Ballard raised the issue of child impact assessments and suggested that this might be an area the NSPCC wishes to highlight when publishing the report. Susan noted that she was aware of child impact assessments and confirmed that the report would be covering a variety of issues.

A CPG member noted her concerns about children being moved to foster care services when they can no longer stay in mother and baby units but the mother still has more time to serve.

Another member informed the group that, even though the number of women giving birth was small, she was aware that a 19-year old women in prison gave birth in her prison cell, and a another woman had to give birth in a taxi on the way to the hospital. She commentated that these incidents had resulted from confusion from prison health care staff as to whether the women where in labor. It was also noted that the first woman's baby was not approved to stay in the mother and baby unit. This left the women and the staff rather traumatised.

Susan commentated that these types of incidents seemed to be common issues for pregnant women in prison who have little access to midwives.

Mark Ballard suggested there was an opportunity to bring some of these issues back to the forefront given that the Justice Bill had been delayed by 9 months.

Janice McGowan noted concerns that there were more barriers between the prison and health service since the NHS had taken over. Janice raised particular concerns regarding access to medication and this not being allowed for security reasons.

Donny Scott commented that there also needs to be a focus on children whose father is in prison. Susan agreed with this point and also raised the fact that there is little research looking at issues for kinship carers.

Ms Fee suggested that Parliamentary Questions be framed around the recommendations in the report. Mr Lyle offered to meet with Susan and Ms Fee to look at this.

Children of Prisoners Europe Conference

Action

Nancy informed the group that the Children of Prisoners Europe conference, held on the 16th May, went very well. The Good Practice Guidance, which was launched at the event, had been circulated along with a Memorandum of Understanding used in Italy. Nancy suggested that anyone wanting further copies should contact Families Outside. Nancy also noted that conference presentations and materials were available on the Families Outside website.

Confirmation of dates and business for future meetings

Action

Confirmation of forthcoming meetings had been circulated to the group. Janice suggested that family members raising concerns about prisoners' physical and mental health be a topic for a forthcoming meeting. Janice

noted that the NHS wouldn't take information from families due to Data Protection and queried whether this could be raised the Colin McConnell. Nancy noted that there was a new protocol between the prison and the NHS around families raising concerns about prisoners who are suicidal. She noted that staff were now required to connect the families to the Duty Manager and then report to back to the family about what action had been taken. Nancy did note that she wasn't sure if this protocol had been fully imbedded but suggested it might be worth querying whether this could be extended to concerns about prisoners accessing appropriate healthcare. Ms. Fee informed the group that the meeting with Colin McConnell was penciled in for the 1st of October and suggested that three of four themes be raised, one of which would be health care. Ms. Fee also suggested raising this issue with the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Donny Scott suggested children's services perspectives on the needs of children and families affected by imprisonment as a topic. Ms Fee suggested this might be useful to flag up with Colin McConnell, if one of the themes were around children's issues.

AOCB

Ms Fee informed the group that work on a parliamentary exhibition was ongoing, and dates were currently being considered along with who would be best to invite.

Date of Next Meeting – 13th August 2014

Append Parliamentary Questions here: