

FAIR Study Participant Perspective

“Charley”

A mother

A response to Caroline Lanskey’s paper on continuity/change in family structures over time.

So I think to myself....when he was in jail, I thought those times were hard. Bringing up our baby alone watching her walk for the first time at 9 months in a visiting hall and having that teary goodbye and running to the car as quickly as possible with baby in tow to get the phone call from him that he was back on his wing in time for dinner...the two hour drive home was lonely. But when he got out of jail that was all a distant memory and the real hard times started....I would wake up every morning get the kids ready for school and nursery and he would just lay in bed! "What's your plans for today I'd say and he would say erm.....pick up the kids and wait for you to get in from work" "really?" I'd think "Mate you need a job your another mouth to feed....he signed on (got job seekers for about 4 months) that bloody annoyed me.....he then starting volunteering for st Giles and then next thing you knew I was helping him prepare for a interview. I forgot to say that him not earning was hard he was used to selling drugs and getting quick money fast money supporting his life style. He went to having like 70 quid a week and me demanding that he got a job....he never even knew what 9am -5pm was...!! Anyway we were able to get through hardships because he became normal I say normal cos he was someone I could bring to my work Xmas party some one who got that working running a home and looking after little ones is a real hard job and the rewards are not of monetary value but of love value. The foundation that we had and real ness and patience in me kept us strong. You gotta truly love someone and help them under stand there is life after jail and they can become a good citizen. Our daughter is 8 in 3 months...and she doesn't know that her dad went jail or was a drug dealer. She knows her mummy and daddy wake up every morning and go work and we can buy her lol dolls and take her on holidays with money we earnt by working.

A response to Karen Souza’s paper on the experiences of mothers over time, when the father has been to prison.

When [he] went jail I was a PA and I loved it. I was offered a promotion that required me to study more. Because i was officially a single parent, I couldn't do it. When you're partner goes away to jail your embarrassed it's shameful and feel like people are judging you....So I had to work hard. I got a degree and became an operational manager. I have since I'm the last month been promoted and I am acting up as a senior operational manager within a large organisational. The stigma of my partner going jail pushed me to go further plans do better for kids. The challenges of him being away when job opportunities came up were hard, I had to do less hours so I could be there to pick up the kids some times I literally had to lend money off [his]mum to feed the kids and visit him in jail.

A response to Sophie Ellis's paper on the experiences of ethnic minority families affected by paternal imprisonment

The only thing I can say on this subject is that I felt victimised because he sold drugs when I visit him I was stripped search once by an officer and said that it was because he sold drugs! As a black woman it is what people expect that your partner is in jail....So speaking about it was the last thing I ever wanted to do. I told one of my very best friends that he was in America with his gran!!

A response to Jennifer Barton-Crosby's paper on the effects of paternal imprisonment on boys' and girls' behaviour

Only my elder girl knows he was in jail. She was embarrassed and quickly asked me not to discuss it or bring her back there for visits. She still doesn't understand why you would do such things to put yourself in a situation to go jail. I think it has made her more determine to strive for the best.