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# **Risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers with their families**

Final Report

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## PREFACE

This document constitutes the final report on the research project, 'Risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers with their families'. The project was carried out in a collaboration between Ormiston Children and Families Trust and the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge. It was funded by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

The project is the first prospective longitudinal study in the United Kingdom and Europe that has addressed directly the views of family sets of prisoners, their (ex)partners and, where appropriate, their children. We interviewed the fathers, (ex)partners and children within four months before, and up to six months after, the father's release. The interviews and various standardised questionnaires addressed the quality of family relationships, contact during imprisonment, communication and problem solving, parenting and care-giving, informal social support, experiences of stigmatisation, finances, employment, accommodation, participation in support programmes, health issues, social behaviour, resilience and other factors that may be linked to positive or negative outcomes for parents and children. This final report provides rich material that shows the complexity of the resettlement process. It contains many quantitative statistical analyses that are also complemented by analyses of and excerpts from qualitative interview data (alternative names have been assigned to participants quoted in the report in order to protect their anonymity).

Gaining access to complete family sets and carrying out repeated interviews in this difficult field of research was an enormous challenge to the research team. It could not have been successfully mastered without the assistance of many people and institutions. First and foremost, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the families who took part and shared their very personal experiences. We hope that they have benefited from these interviews and that this research will contribute to future support for families in similar situations.

We would also like to thank the prison governors, and prison and Ormiston staff who helped to facilitate access to the families. Thanks to the Advisory Group for their expertise and guidance: Gwyneth Boswell, Adrian Grounds, Veronica Hollis, Miriam Light, Giles McCathie, Richard Nicholls (Advisory Chair), and Sarah Salmon. We are also grateful to Abigail Paton and Joe Murray for their advice and support. And, final thanks to Hilary Bagshaw, Sue Clifton, Leah Hamilton, Pascale Reinke, and Naomi Young for their contributions to various phases of the project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and Aims of the Study

Parental imprisonment can be one of the most critical life events for families. It can disrupt marital and family relationships, have negative outcomes for children, and aggravate material and social problems. Furthermore, adjusting to life after prison is challenging for ex-prisoners and their families.

Approximately one-half of prisoners are fathers of children under the age of 18, yet prisoners' children and families seem to be an 'invisible group' in our society (Ministry of Justice/Department for Schools, Children and Families, 2007). How families adjust to the return of an imprisoned partner or parent, the stress these events place on parents and children, and the support systems and coping mechanisms of family members have been rarely addressed in research. Most of past research has focused on parental imprisonment as a risk factor in the development of families and, in particular, the children (e.g., Murray & Farrington, 2008). On the other hand, families with strong ties can also be 'a resource, which is part of the solution' (Ministry of Justice, 2007, p. 17). Such relationships may help to protect the children of prisoners from negative outcomes and enable ex-prisoners to desist from further offending. To provide more detailed knowledge on both risk and protective factors and processes, the present study has been carried out in a collaboration between Ormiston Children and Families Trust and the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge (funded by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund).

The project is the first prospective longitudinal study in the United Kingdom and Europe to investigate risk and protective factors in the resettlement of imprisoned fathers and their families that gathered data from family sets of parents and children. It has addressed the quality of family relationships, contact during imprisonment, communication and problem solving, parenting and care-giving, informal social support, experiences of stigmatisation, finances, employment, accommodation, participation in support programmes, health issues, social behaviour, resilience and other factors that may be linked to positive or negative outcomes for parents and children. The research has been undertaken not only to increase our knowledge of such processes, but also to assist the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and third sector organisations working to support families to develop more effective interventions for imprisoned fathers, their (ex)partners and their children.

## Method

The study employed a longitudinal design, whereby data were collected at two key stages in the resettlement process. Time 1 interviews with imprisoned fathers, their partners or ex-partners and where appropriate, their children, were conducted within four months *before* the fathers were released, and Time 2 interviews were conducted within six months *after* the fathers were released.

The eligibility criteria for the sample were prisoners who: had sentences between eight months and six years; were due for release within four months; had children or step-children aged 0 to 18 years; had contact with one or more of their children/step-children and were planning to maintain contact with them after release; were being released to East Anglia or London; and consented, together with their (ex)partner, to participate in the research.

Considerable variations in the prison policies and regimes of the 13 prisons in our sample made it necessary to employ several methods of recruitment, and the follow up of the participants at Time 2 proved challenging. Our sample at Time 1 comprised 54 imprisoned fathers, 54 mothers, and 90 children. At Time 2, we successfully followed up 40 fathers, 49 mothers and 80 children. Thus, the retention rate varied between 74 and 91 per cent for the different subgroups, and was 74 per cent for complete family sets.

For the 40 family sets who were followed up from Time 1 to Time 2, the average age of the fathers and mothers at Time 1 was approximately 31 and 29, respectively. Of the 68 children included, 48.5% were male and 51.5% were female, and their average age at Time 1 was around six years. The ethnicity of the families was as follows: of the fathers, 80% were White British, 17.5% were Black and 2.5% were Mixed; of the mothers, 82.5% were White British, 7.5% were Black, 2.5% were Mixed, 7.5% were of other ethnicity; of the children, 78.3% were White British, 8.7% were Black, 1.4% were Asian, 10.1% were Mixed, 1.4% were of other ethnicity.

Following a pilot phase, semi-structured interview schedules for fathers, mothers, and children were designed to record both quantitative and qualitative data. Standardised measures were also used to obtain data on aspects of health, family functioning, parenting, support, stigma, resilience, and childhood adjustment. Repeated measures of outcomes were used as much as possible to make

comparisons from before to after the fathers' release. In total, the research team carried out 281 interviews and established 358 data cases (including children who were too young to be interviewed).

## **Main Findings**

Due to the large number of variables and modest sample size, we mainly carried out bivariate statistical analyses (i.e., simple correlations, t-tests, and chi-square tests). For specific questions, we also applied multivariate analyses (i.e., multiple regression, cluster analysis, and discriminant analysis). Our results showed mixed experiences after release:

- the quality of family relationships continued to be relatively stable;
- fathers were less involved with their children than prior to imprisonment;
- according to parents' reports, most children adjusted relatively well to their father's release;
- fathers and mothers reported lower consumption of both alcohol and illegal drugs than prior to the imprisonment;
- fathers and mothers reported improved physical and mental health;
- the experience of stigmatization did not increase;
- the level of support from family and friends remained the same;
- fathers were economically worse off than before prison;
- mothers were in a financially stronger position than during the fathers' imprisonment; and
- approximately one-fifth of the fathers had been returned to prison.

Families' expectations, as compared with their actual experiences, of release showed that:

- overall, their expectations regarding potential problems on release were mostly realistic;
- finding a job and financial difficulties were expected by both partners to be the most frequent problems for fathers, and this was indeed the father's experience after release;
- mothers had more negative expectations about the father's involvement in criminal activity, alcohol and drug use, but the experiences after release were more positive and similarly rated by both partners; and
- fewer mothers and fathers lived together after release than they had expected before release, although the overall quality of their relationship, on average, did not decrease significantly.

The predictors most consistently linked to positive resettlement outcomes for fathers, mothers and children were:

- high quality of family relationships;
- good communication between the father and family during imprisonment;
- high frequency of contact during imprisonment;
- intensive involvement of fathers with children before prison;
- social support from family and friends;
- participation in family-oriented programmes (when controlled for the quality of the parents' relationship);
- more material resources before imprisonment (i.e., income, employment, accommodation); and
- less previous involvement of the father with crime and the criminal justice system.

These variables (or selections of them) predicted a broad range of resettlement outcomes: living together after release; quality of parents' relationship after release; quality of relationship with the children; approaches to problem solving; less problems with alcohol and drugs; fewer difficulties with accommodation, employment, and finances (mainly predicted by material resources and support networks); fewer health problems of the mothers; desistance from crime; and overall resilience of the fathers. The positive dimensions of the predictors were also related to better adjustment, fewer conduct problems and more pro-social behaviour of the children (assessed by parents' reports). In the youngsters' self reports, the positive dimensions of some of these variables predicted fewer educational difficulties and experiences of bullying at school in younger children. The relationship with teachers and help from others also had a protective function. For the small group of young people in our study, higher quality of the parents' relationship and communication, and greater father's involvement with them before imprisonment predicted a better relationship with the father, better school achievement and less trouble with the police.

Overall, the predictive validity in our study was rather strong. Often between 30 and 60 per cent of the outcome variation at Time 2 could be explained by differences in the predictors at Time 1. The average amount of explained variance for fathers' outcomes was approximately 50 per cent, and for mothers, one-third.

In addition to variable-oriented data analyses, we also investigated different types of families that had been detected in a cluster analysis. Although there was much heterogeneity between the families, two rather homogeneous subgroups could be identified. One group showed a relatively smooth resettlement process, whereas the other (smaller) subgroup had a particularly difficult adjustment experience. Both groups could be clearly predicted by Time 1 variables (i.e., the quality of relationship and communication between the parents, frequency of contact during imprisonment, fathers' pre-prison involvement with children, informal support from family and friends, and participation in family-oriented programmes during the sentence).

Overall, the quantitative findings showed that there were existing risk and protective factors of the family before the father's imprisonment. There were also factors that emerged during and after this critical life event. The qualitative data enriched the quantitative findings and provided further insight into the interaction of pre-prison family characteristics and coping patterns. For example, the children's voices indicated that:

- their father's absence often provoked sadness, anxiety, confusion and anger;
- many did not speak about their father's imprisonment out of fear of negative reactions from others;
- most found comfort and support from their mothers, friends or relatives but some coped alone;
- the opportunity to visit their father was important but these experiences could be practically and emotionally challenging; and
- most were happy to see their father again, but those who experienced the breakdown of their parents' relationship or the re-appearance of their father's alcohol problems found his return difficult.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although the sample is modest, it is broadly comparable to national characteristics of the male prison population according to age (Prison Reform Trust, 2009) and offence type (Berman, 2011). There was also no highly selective drop-out between the first and second interviews, although ethnic minority prisoners were slightly less represented after release. This may indicate that extra care is needed to ensure the participation of minority ethnic groups in the course of a longitudinal project. One must also expect that some element of self-selection may have influenced the recruitment and retention

processes. However, one cannot say with certainty in which direction such a potential bias may have gone. Our sample may have contained a higher than average number of families with positive relationships because the partners were willing to participate. On the other hand, it is also possible that participating prisoners and their partners sought guidance from the study and the interviews. In addition to sampling issues, there may have been positive self-presentation by the participants. However, these are general problems and not specific to our study (Lösel & Schmucker, 2002).

Against this background, we recommend a cautious interpretation and generalisation of our findings. However, the rich set of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as relatively strong and mostly consistent correlations between risk and protective factors at Time 1 and outcomes at Time2, justify some recommendations for policy and practice:

- High quality family relationships were a very strong and consistent predictor of successful resettlement outcomes for all family members. This suggests that both NOMS and family organisations need to consider what further action can be taken to maintain and strengthen these relationships.
- The data demonstrated the importance of frequent contact between the father and family during imprisonment. This clearly suggests investing further planning and resources into increasing communication opportunities for all imprisoned fathers, for example, through more high quality visiting experiences and greater access to phone calls.
- The analysis of prior expectations and experiences after release showed that a more accurate picture with regard to anticipated difficulties and resettlement outcomes was achieved by taking both parents' views into account. It would, therefore, be useful to include the partner's views in release and resettlement planning.
- As expected, employment, accommodation and financial problems were important difficulties in the resettlement process. However, these were not only related to a lack of material resources, but also to a lack of social resources such as quality of family relationships and contact during imprisonment. This suggests that measures to improve resettlement should not be applied in

isolation, but should take into account the pattern of needs according to NOMS' concept of multiple pathways out of crime.

- The importance of support from wider family and friends in the resettlement process suggests that prisons, probation and voluntary sector agencies should consider how to encourage most effectively such informal support in resettlement for prisoners and their families.
- Family orientated programmes were associated with positive resettlement outcomes when prior quality of parental relationship was taken into account. This is promising. However, as these findings are based on correlational analyses, this is not yet 'hard' evaluation data of programme effectiveness. Therefore, we recommend further consideration of family orientated programmes and their methodologically controlled evaluation.
- Our qualitative analyses revealed the fragility of the well-being of most of the children and young people interviewed in the study. These findings reinforce the need for children of prisoners to be recognised and cared for as vulnerable individuals in local and national policy and for organisations involved with children of prisoners to be sensitive to their vulnerabilities.
- The relevance of family relationships prior to imprisonment suggests a need to widen the view from corrective to preventive family-oriented interventions. Families should not only receive adequate support and guidance when the father is in prison, but also when there are early risks for offending, substance misuse and other deviant pathways in individual and family development.

In addition to the above, we make the following technical recommendations:

- The difficulty in obtaining information about prisoners' parental status during recruitment highlighted the lack of systematic recording of information on prisoners' children by NOMS. Therefore, action on this problem should be taken to enable better services for prisoners, their families, and research in this field.

- The task of following up families post-release demonstrated the difficulties in tracking ex-prisoners and their families beyond the prison gates. Therefore, records should contain information which best serves the families' needs after release. Such an improvement would be in accordance with NOMS' mission of effective end-to-end offender management.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Prisoners' children and families have been described as 'forgotten victims' (Codd, 1998, p. 148), an 'invisible group' (Ministry of Justice/Department for Schools, Children and Families, 2007, p. 2), and the 'unseen victims of the prison boom' (Petersilia, 2005, p. 34). Indeed, the number of women and children who experience the imprisonment of their spouse, partner or father is not negligible. An estimated 54 per cent of prisoners in England and Wales are parents to children under the age of 18 when they enter prison (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Similarly, in the United States, this figure is approximately 51 per cent (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Murray and Farrington (2008) calculated that in mid-2006, approximately 0.8 per cent (i.e., 88,000) of children under the age of 18 in England and Wales were experiencing the imprisonment of a parent. As stable relationships and networks are highly important for the healthy functioning of children, partners and society (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010), the imprisonment of a parent makes families particularly vulnerable.

Despite their prevalence in the overall population, studies on the experiences of prisoners' families have only recently begun to accumulate. This may be due to challenges in identifying and accessing prisoners and their families for research, as well as social and cultural perceptions about what is acceptable to the public. A stronger focus on prisoners and their families is important for several reasons. For example, parental imprisonment may disrupt existing marital and family relationships and have negative outcomes for children. In addition, research suggests that the maintenance of family ties supports desistance from crime (Mills & Codd, 2008; Savolainen, 2009). A better understanding of such processes may help to inform policies to protect and ensure the rights and well-being of prisoners' children and families.

### **Risk and Protective Factors during Imprisonment and after Release**

The imprisonment of fathers and the related negative experiences can be seen as risk factors that increase the probability of a range of undesirable resettlement outcomes for families, such as material deprivation, social isolation, inter-generational offending, and unemployment for the father. On the other hand, personal and social resources such as resilience and support from friends and family may buffer negative effects and enable people to cope in stressful and challenging circumstances.

Explanations of such processes and their outcomes are provided by various theories such as social control, social learning, rational choice, defiance, strain, stigma and labelling theory. Accordingly, there is a broad range of factors that seem to have a risk or protective effect. However, protective factors are

not basically different from risks, but often only at opposite ends of a continuum (Lösel & Bender, 2003). For example, a strong partner relationship may support positive resettlement of the father but a weak relationship may increase the probability of negative experiences after release. This makes analyses of protective effects particularly complicated (Lösel & Farrington, 2010). The strength of and inter-relationships between risk and protective factors determine whether families may be particularly vulnerable or resilient before and after release. Resilience is the process of effective adaptation to risk or adversity to achieve positive outcomes (Lösel & Bender, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Resilience encompasses qualities of the individual, characteristics of the family, and aspects of the social environment. In the following section, we briefly review findings on risk and protective factors in relation to imprisoned fathers and their families.

*Quality of family relationships.* It has long been recognised that the imprisonment of a father or partner is likely to bring about strain on family roles and relationships (e.g., Anderson, 1966). The type and quality of family ties might therefore help or hinder prisoner resettlement and family functioning after prison (e.g., Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Lösel & Bender, 2003; Morris, 1965). Positive parent-child and marital and partner relationships have been identified as protecting against risk for adversity (Lösel & Bender, 2003). As such, strong, supportive and accepting family relationships before prison can ensure their endurance through the prison sentence and beyond (e.g., Hairston, 1995; Morris, 1965; Nelson, Dees & Allen, 1999). However, evidence also indicates that some prisoners have fragile family relationships before prison, and conflicts and other difficulties between families and intimate partners are often reported after release (e.g., McDermott & King, 1992; Naser & Visser, 2006; Noble, 1995; Zamble & Quinsey, 1997).

*Contact during imprisonment.* Family relationships are supported when contact is maintained (e.g., Carlson & Cervera, 1991; Hairston, 1991; Smith, 2003). Contact with family during imprisonment may also have a positive knock-on effect on resettlement outcomes such as finding a job, accommodation and desistance from offending (Holt & Miller, 1972; May, Sharma, & Stewart, 2008; Niven & Stewart, 2005). On the other hand, studies have documented the difficulties families face in maintaining contact during imprisonment (e.g., Deane, 1988; Farida, 1992; Matthews, 1983; Peart & Asquith, 1992; Richards et al., 1994; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). In recent years, services and conditions in many UK prisons have been improved (e.g., Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Pugh, 2004). This is important because little or no contact between children and imprisoned fathers may have a negative implication for attachment relationships (Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004).

*Child attachment.* Since Bowlby's (1973) pioneering work on attachment theory, much research has confirmed the importance of secure attachment bonds for positive child development and behaviour (e.g., Erikson, Sroufe & Egeland, 1985). Therefore, separation of imprisoned fathers from their children might have implications for the quality of the attachment bond that is developed (e.g., Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Hairston, 1995). Furthermore, the development of insecure attachment in childhood can lead to deficits in social and moral functioning in adulthood (e.g., Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Fonagy et al., 1997).

*Parenting and care-giving.* Positive parenting practices such as warmth, acceptance, supervision, communication and consistency have been empirically linked to protecting against negative developmental outcomes for children (e.g., Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). On the other hand, rejecting parenting and the absence of supervision and engagement with children can translate into strong risk factors for child behavioural problems such as delinquency (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Criminal parents have an enhanced risk for inappropriate parenting skills, and fathers in prison typically report that they want to improve their parenting skills (e.g., Hairston, 1989).

*Informal and formal support.* Supportive relationships with relatives and friends, and also other community members and organisations can be crucial for vulnerable families (e.g., Deane, 1988; Lösel & Bender, 2003; Lowenstein, 1986; Paylor & Smith, 1994; Visher, Kachnowski, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004). Extended family members such as grandparents, parents and siblings, as well as friends and school teachers have an important protective function in supporting prisoners through the prison sentence and after release (e.g., Boswell, 2002; Morris, 1965; Paylor & Smith, 1994; Richards et al., 1994; Shaw, 1987). Conversely, a lack of supportive social networks and pro-social models in the community has also been identified as a risk factor for adverse outcomes for children (e.g., Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Lösel & Bender, 2003). Moreover, community factors have been found to moderate the experiences of stigmatisation of families of prisoners. In Fishman's (1990) study, prisoners' wives reported a lack of feeling of stigmatisation in communities where crime was commonplace. Some research has found that informal support from family members is utilised more and considered more important than formal support from organisations (e.g., McEvoy, O'Mahony, Horner, & Lyner, 1999).

*Stigma.* Partners and children of prisoners may experience secondary stigma and shame in relation to the imprisonment (e.g., Anderson, 1966; Condry, 2007, Fishman, 1990; Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Morris, 1965; Peart & Asquith, 1992). This can be associated with a sense of isolation and loneliness (e.g., Braman, 2004; Miller, 2003; Pugh, 2004; Richards, 1992; Sack, Seidler, & Thomas, 1976). Condry

(2007) reported that losing friends was a common outcome for family members of serious offenders. Stigma and bullying at school might also affect children of prisoners both during and after the imprisonment (e.g., Boswell, 2002; Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Pugh, 2004).

*Accommodation.* A significant proportion of prisoners (e.g., 37 per cent; Ministry of Justice, 2010) are likely to need support with finding accommodation after release. Statistics on reoffending rates one year after prison for those who were homeless before their imprisonment have been reported to be 79 per cent, compared to 47 per cent for their counterparts (Ministry of Justice, 2010). When a lack of accommodation and employment are experienced at the same time, a large representative survey estimated an increase of 43 per cent in the risk of reoffending after prison (May, Sharma, & Stewart, 2008).

*Employment and finances.* Much research on the effects of imprisonment on prisoners' partners and children has cited financial and material hardship as among the most significant problems (e.g., Anderson, 1966; Braman, 2004; Davis, 1992; Fishman, 1990; McDermott & King, 1992; Noble, 1995; Peart & Asquith, 1992; Pugh, 2004; Schneller, 1976; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2009; Shaw, 1987). Alternatively, some families might be better off financially from the absence of a father or partner whose lifestyle is highly costly (e.g., Pugh, 2004). Moreover, strained financial situations may continue after release from prison (e.g., Cooke, 2005; Naser & Visser, 2006). It has been well-documented that having a criminal conviction, not least a prison sentence, makes gaining employment more difficult (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). For offenders who were employed before prison, reoffending one year after release is around 40 per cent, and 65 per cent for those not employed before prison (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

*Education.* The Prison Reform Trust's (2010) review of the prison population in England and Wales reported that the reading ability of around 50 per cent of prisoners is lower than that of the average 11 year old. Imprisonment may exacerbate these difficulties and thus, reduce life chances after release. However, time spent in prison may also be used to gain skills to apply to the labour market. Wilson, Gallagher and MacKenzie (2000) have shown that prisoners who are involved in work, education and training programmes are less likely to reoffend after prison. Parental imprisonment has also been linked to school failure and increased risk of later unemployment for children (e.g., Murray & Farrington, 2008). For wives of prisoners, higher levels of education have been associated with better coping (Lowenstein, 1984).

*Sentence factors.* Long periods of separation due to imprisonment have been found to exacerbate changes in prisoners' marital status (e.g., Pavalko & Elder, 1990; Walmsley, Howard, & White, 1992), and have been associated with a negative impact on imprisoned fathers' concept of fatherhood (e.g., Heskin, Bolton, Smith, & Bannister, 1974; Tripp, 2001; Walker, 2010). Homicide and sexual crimes (e.g., Condry, 2007), and first time imprisonment appear to be associated with higher levels of stigmatisation for family members (e.g., Morris, 1965).

*Participation in offending behaviour programmes.* Reviews have concluded that there is a moderate overall positive effect of offending behaviour treatment programmes on reoffending (Lösel, 2011; MacKenzie, 2006; McGuire, 2002). However, there is also a large variation between different kinds of interventions. Theory-based multi-modal, cognitive-behavioural, and well-structured therapeutic communities, and education and life skills programmes reveal the most consistent and strong effects. Treatment outcomes also depend on the quality of treatment implementation, staff features, type of setting, institutional climate, offender characteristics and many other factors (Lösel, 2011). Indeed, we do not yet know how well-known protective effects such as positive marital relationships and employment (e.g., Laub & Sampson, 2003) interact with the impact of programmes (Lösel, 2011).

*Expectations of release.* The prospect of impending release of a partner or father from prison may be a great relief for families (Boswell, 2002; Richards et al., 1994). However, the anticipation of release and thereafter might also be a period of increased family strain (e.g., Jamieson & Grounds, 2005; McEvoy et al., 1999; Noble, 1995). Longitudinal research has shown that being optimistic about life chances after release, and thinking through plans after release were characteristics of desisting offenders (Maruna, 2001). Cross-sectional research findings concur that prisoners are highly optimistic about their experiences after release, for example, with regard to finding employment (Visher, La Vigne, & Castro, 2003), and also unrealistically optimistic about their chances of reoffending compared to official reoffending figures (e.g., Dhimi, Mandel, Loewenstein, & Ayton, 2006). Although expectations and plans of desistance are highly important for desistance, there are also many individual and social obstacles to a behavioural change (Bottoms & Shapland, 2011; Shapland, Bottoms, & Muir, 2011).

*Mental health.* A recent review of the prison population in England and Wales reported that as many as 72 per cent of male prisoners had an existing mental health condition before they arrived in prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2009). This is significantly higher than the 23 per cent estimated for the general population (McManus, Meltzer, Brugha, Bebbington, & Jenkins, 2009). Furthermore, unsatisfactory management in prisons may maintain or worsen existing problems (e.g., Prison Reform Trust, 2009).

Stress-related and emotional health problems are not only typical for prisoners but also enhanced in their families (e.g., Deane, 1988; Fishman, 1990; Morris, 1965; Noble, 1995). Children with a parent in prison are vulnerable to at least twice the risk of suffering adverse mental health outcomes than children without an imprisoned parent (Murray & Farrington, 2008).

*Alcohol and drug addiction.* Approximately 55 per cent of prisoners have substance misuse problems (Prison Reform Trust, 2010). Treatment for addiction is widespread in prisons in the United Kingdom, and completion of such programmes is often part of a prisoner's sentence plan. Although there are positive effects of some of these programmes (e.g., Koehler, Lösel, Akoensi, & Humphries, 2011), prisoners who emerge from prison with addiction problems are likely to face difficulties in resettlement.

*Children's coping.* The outcome of a father's imprisonment may not only depend on the aforementioned and other characteristics of the parents, but also on the child's coping style. For example, Boswell (2002) reported that some children feared that family life would not return to normal after their father's release, that their returning father would be unable to gain employment, or that they themselves would put strain on the father. Conversely, others appeared to have few concerns about release and beyond, believing that prison had not had a negative impact on the family, or that prison had been a deterrent to future offending.

### **Conclusions from Previous Research**

Although our brief review of past research shows a number of theoretically and practically relevant findings, we are far from having detailed and replicated knowledge of the risks and protective factors of imprisoned fathers and their families. Past research has mostly been cross-sectional and descriptive in design. Much less research exists that collected longitudinal data during imprisonment and after release. In England, Morris (1965) carried out a prospective longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment on families that collected data from prisoners and their wives during the imprisonment and after release. However, this pioneering study is over 40 years old, and significant social and political changes (e.g., more broken homes, more migration, and improved social services) do not allow generalisation of the findings to the current times. Most of the previous studies have addressed separately the experience of the imprisoned father or of the mother. Very few included the perspective of both partners in the relationship. Richards et al. (1994) carried out a longitudinal study that interviewed fathers and some of their children's caregivers during imprisonment, and conducted follow-up interviews with the released prisoners only. In the United States, *The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study* at Princeton University, and the Urban Institute's project, *Returning Home:*

*Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Re-Entry*, investigated the impact of imprisonment on resettlement by conducting interviews with prisoners and partners or other family members. However, to our knowledge, there are no longitudinal studies that have addressed directly the views of *family sets* of prisoners, their partners and their children during imprisonment and after release. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the risk and protective factors in resettlement for prisoners, their families and children in a prospective longitudinal and comprehensive manner.

## 2 METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

The present study employed a prospective longitudinal design, whereby data were collected at two key stages in the resettlement process (hereafter referred to as “Time 1” and “Time 2”). Thus, Time 1 interviews with imprisoned fathers, their (ex)partners<sup>1</sup> and where appropriate, their children, were conducted within four months *before* the fathers were released, and Time 2 interviews were conducted within six months *after* the fathers were released.

### 2.2 Sample

The eligibility criteria for the research were prisoners who:

- were serving sentences between eight months and six years;
- were due for release within four months;
- had children or step-children aged 0 to 18 (inclusive);
- had some contact with their children/step-children, and planned to maintain contact with them after release<sup>2</sup>;
- were being released to East Anglia or London.

Prisoners who were serving sentences for sexual offences were excluded from our sample because they were likely to have different needs from other prisoners. Similarly, foreign nationals were excluded because they were less likely to remain in the UK after their release.

Recruitment took place at 13 HM Prisons<sup>3</sup>, but the final sample was drawn from eight prisons in the Eastern region: HMPs Blundeston, Chelmsford, Edmunds Hill<sup>4</sup>, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Norwich, The

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “(ex)partner” and “mother” will be used interchangeably throughout this report.

<sup>2</sup> Imprisoned fathers who had (ex)partners and/or (step)children, whom they were not necessarily planning to live with after release, were included in the sample to encompass a broader definition of “family.”

<sup>3</sup> HMPs Bedford, Blundeston, Chelmsford, Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Norwich, Pentonville, The Mount, Wandsworth, Wayland, Wellingborough, and Wormwood Scrubs.

<sup>4</sup> HMP Edmunds Hill was renamed ‘Highpoint North’ in 2011.

Mount, and Wayland. The prisoners' security categories ranged from B to D<sup>5</sup> to include a relatively representative sample of prisoners who fitted the research criteria. Our sample at Time 1 consisted of 54 imprisoned fathers or step-fathers, 54 mothers, and 45 children<sup>6</sup>, representing a total of 153 interviews that were carried out. Importantly, this comprised 54 complete "family sets" in which data were triangulated from the father, mother and children of the same family.

Our sample at Time 2 consisted of 40 fathers, 49 mothers, and 39 children<sup>7</sup>, representing a total of 128 interviews. This comprised 40 complete family sets that were followed up from Time 1.

## **2.3 Development of Interview Schedules**

### **Pre-Pilot Phase**

#### *Pre-pilot focus group with imprisoned fathers*

To inform the development of the fathers' interview schedule, a focus group was conducted at HMP Edmunds Hill. Nine imprisoned fathers who were enrolled in parenting courses were identified by Ormiston staff and invited to take part. The fathers were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. They were told that they would not be deducted pay for taking part during work hours, and did not receive any compensation for participating.

The focus group was conducted in the Ormiston office at HMP Edmunds Hill and was facilitated by three members of the Research Team<sup>8</sup>. The fathers were asked to complete a short questionnaire containing questions about their demographics, current sentence and children. Then, the fathers were asked nine questions to generate discussion on issues pertaining to the effects of imprisonment and release on prisoners and their families. These were based on a comprehensive literature review of the topic. The focus group took approximately three hours, and the session was tape-recorded, with the fathers' permission.

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<sup>5</sup> Prisoners are classified according to four levels of security: A to D. A Category 'A' prisoner is held in a maximum security prison. A Category 'D' prisoner resides in open conditions.

<sup>6</sup> A total of 90 children were included at Time 1. 45 were too young to be interviewed (under 4).

<sup>7</sup> A total of 80 children were included at Time 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology), Gill Pugh (Ormiston) and Karen Souza (Institute of Criminology)

### *Pre-pilot interviews with mothers*

To inform the development of the mothers' interview schedule, telephone interviews were conducted with four partners of imprisoned fathers at HMP Wayland. The partners were recruited by Ormiston staff in the visitors' centre. The partners were informed that their participation was completely voluntary, and they did not receive any compensation for taking part in the interviews.

Telephone interviews were carried out by one member<sup>9</sup> of the research team. The mothers were first asked seven questions about their demographics and children. Next, the mothers were asked five open-ended questions: (1) What problems have you had because of your partner's imprisonment? (2) What has helped you to cope? (3) How do you think your children have been affected? (4) What are your expectations of what life will be like after your partner is released? And finally (5) What things do you think would make life easier for you and your family when your partner is released? The telephone interviews with the mothers took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

### *Pre-pilot children's schedule development*

For the children's interview schedules, the research team generated a list of items which were categorised into the topics of: leisure and activities, school performance, contact with father during imprisonment, family environment, childcare and parenting, emotional adjustment, substance use, delinquency, family post-release adjustment, and support. These were developed based on a comprehensive literature review of the effects of parental imprisonment on children. The items were tested via role plays within the research team and then finalised after extensive discussion amongst the research team and consultation with the Advisory Group.

## **Pilot Phase**

### *Pilot interview schedules*

Using the findings from our literature review and the pre-pilot phase, semi-structured interview schedules for fathers, mothers, and children were designed to record both quantitative and qualitative data at Time 1.

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<sup>9</sup> Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology)

The pilot interview schedule for fathers comprised 19 sections which contained 167 items relating to: (a) demographic characteristics; (b) current sentence; (c) previous convictions; (d) childhood and family history; (e) education and employment; (f) relationship status; (g) children; (h) accommodation; (i) current relationship; (j) childcare and parenting; (k) contact with family during imprisonment; (l) prisoner coping; (m) family adjustment; (n) substance use; (o) physical and mental health; (p) prison programmes, education and training; (q) family post-release adjustment; (r) post-release arrangements; and finally, (s) formal and informal support.

Similarly, the pilot interview schedule for mothers comprised 15 sections which contained 148 items relating to: (a) demographic characteristics; (b) education and employment; (c) relationship status; (d) children; (e) accommodation; (f) current relationship; (g) childcare and parenting; (h) contact with family during imprisonment; (i) family adjustment; (j) children's adjustment; (k) substance use; (l) physical and mental health; (m) previous convictions; (n) family post-release adjustment; and finally, (o) post-release arrangements.

In addition, standardized measures were used to obtain data on both fathers' and mothers' health, as well as their experiences of family functioning, parenting, support, and stigma. The *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) was also used to measure parents' assessment of their children's adjustment.

For the children, three sets of age-appropriate interview schedules were constructed. The interview schedule for children aged 4 to 7 contained 27 items; for 8 to 11 year olds it contained 48 items; and for children aged 12 and over, there were 58 items. The schedules were divided into sections that contained questions relating to: demographic characteristics; leisure and activities; school; contact with father during absence; family environment; childcare and parenting; emotional adjustment; substance use (age 8+ only); trouble with the police (age 8+ only); family post-release adjustment; and finally, formal and informal support.

In addition, children aged eight and older who knew that their father was in prison completed a short questionnaire on perceived and experienced stigma (adapted from the *Rejection Experiences* scale in Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997). To measure child adjustment, children aged 11 and

older were additionally asked to complete the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (Goodman, 1997).

#### *Time 1 Pilot study*

The main aim of the Time 1 pilot study was to test the interview schedules and procedure. This was carried out at HMP Wayland. Eight imprisoned fathers were recruited by Ormiston staff. The fathers were asked to provide their partner's contact details so that their families could also be invited to take part. Four partners and four children subsequently consented to participate.

The Time 1 pilot interviews with imprisoned fathers, mothers and children were carried out separately by three members of the research team<sup>10</sup>. All of the participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. The participants were also told that no identifying information would be written on any of the interview documents to protect their confidentiality and anonymity.

#### *Fathers' interviews*

The imprisoned fathers were additionally informed that the research was independent from NOMS. They were told that they would not be deducted pay for taking part during work hours, and did not receive any compensation for participating in the interview. The interviews with imprisoned fathers were carried out either via legal visits or on the prison wings<sup>11</sup>, and in the absence of prison staff. The interviews were divided into two parts. Part one involved semi-structured interviews using the fathers' interview schedule, which took approximately one hour. Afterwards, the fathers self-completed the standardized measures which took approximately 20 minutes. For fathers who had difficulties reading and writing, the interviewer read the questions to them and recorded their responses.

#### *Mothers' interviews*

Interviews with the mothers were carried out at a date, time and location convenient to them (typically in their homes). Again, the interviews were divided into two parts. Part one involved semi-structured interviews using the mothers' interview schedule, which took approximately one hour. Afterwards, the mothers self-completed the standardized measures which took approximately 20 minutes. For mothers who had difficulties reading and writing, the interviewer read the questions to them and recorded their responses.

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<sup>10</sup> Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology), Gillian Pugh (Ormiston) and Karen Souza (Institute of Criminology)

<sup>11</sup> One prisoner was interviewed at his partner's residence while he was on Home Leave.

### *Children's interviews*

In preparation for the children's interviews, two members of the research team<sup>12</sup> consulted with Ormiston practitioners to identify the issues involved in interviewing children. This included aspects such as children's levels of maturity and understanding, rapport, confidentiality, and child protection. The information gleaned was then incorporated into the children's interview procedure for the pilot and main studies at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Games were played with the young children to 'break the ice' and establish rapport. The children's interviews comprised two parts. First, all children aged 4 to 17 were interviewed using the age-appropriate interview schedules. To help facilitate responses to some of the questions, visual aids were used with younger children. For the second part of the interview, children aged 8 and older were asked to self-complete the standardized measures.

At the end of the interviews, the fathers and their families were each given a list of support services and a leaflet which contained the research team's contact details. Each family was compensated for their time with a £10 shopping voucher after completing the pilot interviews.

### **Time 1 Interview Schedules**

The findings from the pilot exercise informed the development of the Time 1 interview schedules. Thus, the Time 1 interview schedules were finalised in three stages. First, the research team recorded their experiences with the interview schedules with regards to: content relevance, appropriateness of response items, language used, topic sequence, length, and any other relevant issues. Next, analyses were conducted to determine the variability in participants' responses, as well as consistencies in missing data. Finally, agreement on which items to retain, modify, and remove from the interview schedules was reached via extensive discussions amongst the research team and consultation with the Advisory Group.<sup>13</sup> A list of the standardized measures used at Time 1 for fathers, mothers and children can be found in Table 1.

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<sup>12</sup> Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology) and Karen Souza (Institute of Criminology)

<sup>13</sup> Copies of the Time 1 interview schedules can be requested from the authors.

Table 1. Standardised measures used at Time 1

| Standardized Measure  | Fathers | Mothers | Children |
|---|---------|---------|----------|
| <p><b>CAGE Questionnaire</b> (Ewing, 1984)<br/>                     The CAGE is a self-report screening tool for symptoms associated with alcohol use (e.g., <i>Have you ever felt that you should cut down on your drinking? Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?</i> )</p>   | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>Family Problem Solving Communication</b> (McCubbin, McCubbin, &amp; Thompson, 1996)<br/>                     The Family Problem Solving Communication scale assesses conflict-related family communication. It comprises two subscales: incendiary communication (e.g., <i>We yelled and screamed at each other</i>) and affirming communication (e.g., <i>We talked things through till we reached a solution</i>).</p>  | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>General Health Questionnaire – 12</b> (Goldberg, 1978)<br/>                     The GHQ-12 is a measure of current psychological well-being (e.g., <i>Have you recently been feeling unhappy and depressed? Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?</i>)</p>   | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)</b> (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, &amp; Farley, 1988)<br/>                     Subscales: Friend and Family<br/>                     The MSPSS is an assessment of support from family, friends and significant others (e.g., <i>I get the emotional help and support I need from my family, I can talk about my problems with my friends</i>).</p>   | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>Parenting</b> (McCarty &amp; Doyle, 2000)<br/>                     Subscales: <i>Discipline Scale and Parent Praise</i><br/>                     The Discipline subscale measures parents' reports of disciplinary strategies (e.g., <i>yell or scold</i>). The Praise subscale measures the frequency of parents' positive praise and support for good behaviour (e.g., <i>give your child some reward</i>).</p>   | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>Stigma</b> (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, &amp; Nuttbrock, 1997)<br/>                     Subscale: <i>Perceived devaluation/discrimination</i><br/>                     Items were adapted from the original measure which was used to assess devaluation and discrimination associated with psychiatric treatment (e.g., <i>Most people believe that former prisoners cannot be trusted, Most employers will not employ a person who has been in prison</i>)</p>                            | X       | X       |          |
| <p><b>Stigma</b> (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, &amp; Nuttbrock, 1997)<br/>                     Subscale: <i>Rejection Experiences</i><br/>                     Items were adapted from the original measure which was used to assess rejection experiences associated with drug addiction and mental health (e.g., <i>Did some of your friends treat you differently after your (ex)partner had gone to prison? Have people used the fact that your (ex)partner is in prison to hurt you?</i>)</p> |         | X       | X        |
| <p><b>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Impact Supplement</b> (Goodman, 1997)<br/>                     The SDQ is a behavioural screening questionnaire measuring</p>  |         | X       | X        |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| children's adjustment. It comprises five subscales: Conduct Problems (e.g., <i>I get very angry and often lose my temper</i> ), Hyperactivity (e.g., <i>I am restless, I cannot stay still for long</i> ), Emotional Symptoms (e.g., <i>I worry a lot</i> ), Peer Problems (e.g., <i>Other children or young people pick on me or bully me</i> ), and Pro-social Behaviour (e.g., <i>I usually share with others</i> ). |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|

**Time 2 Interview Schedules**

The interview schedules for Time 2 were based on those of Time 1. Repeated measures of outcomes were used as much as possible to enable us to make comparisons from before to after the fathers' release. The development of the Time 2 interview schedules took place in four stages.

First, to avoid replicating data at Time 2, the sections on demographic characteristics, previous convictions, current sentence, childhood and family history, and education and employment (before prison) were omitted from the fathers' and, where applicable, the mothers' interview schedules. Second, the items were revised to ask about the current status of fathers, mothers and children (e.g., "Can you tell me about your accommodation experiences since your release?"). Third, items were added to explore key resettlement outcomes (e.g., "Are you currently living with your children?" "How difficult has finding a job been for you since your release from prison?"). Fourth, the Time 2 interview schedules were finalised after extensive discussions amongst the research team and consultation with the Advisory Group.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Time 2 interview schedule for fathers comprised 17 sections which contained 166 items relating to: (a) current offence (for fathers who were back in prison); (b) accommodation; (c) employment, training and education; (d) activities and leisure time; (e) physical and mental health; (f) substance use; (g) fathers on the outside; (h) relationship status; (i) quality of relationship with (ex)partner; (j) children; (k) childcare and parenting; (l) children's adjustment; (m) prisoner post-release adjustment; (n) family and (ex)partner post-release adjustment; (o) formal and informal support; (p) other; and finally, (q) the interview process.

Similarly, the Time 2 interview schedule for mothers comprised 17 sections which contained 140 items relating to: (a) father's current circumstances; (b) accommodation; (c) employment, training and

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<sup>14</sup> Copies of the Time 2 interview schedules can be requested from the authors.

education; (d) activities and leisure time; (e) physical and mental health; (f) substance use; (g) criminal convictions; (h) relationship status; (i) quality of relationship with (ex)partner; (j) children; (k) childcare and parenting; (l) children's adjustment; (m) prisoner post-release adjustment; (n) family post-release adjustment; (o) formal and informal support; (p) other; and finally, (q) the interview process.

In addition, the same standardized measures from Time 1 were used to obtain data on both the father's and mother's health, as well as their experiences of family functioning, parenting, support, resilience, and stigma. Again, the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) was used to measure parents' assessment of their children's adjustment.

As with Time 1, three sets of age-appropriate interview schedules were devised for the children. The interview schedule for children aged 4 to 7 contained 36 items; for 8 to 11 year olds it contained 53 items; and for children aged 12 and over, there were 53 items. Furthermore, the schedules were divided into sections that were comprised of questions relating to: leisure and activities; school and friends; substance use (age 8+ only); contact with the police (age 8+ only); childcare and parenting; emotional adjustment; and finally, formal and informal support.

In addition, children aged eight and older who knew that their father had been in prison completed a short questionnaire comprised of 13 items on resilience and five items on perceived and experienced stigma (adapted from the *Rejection Experiences* scale in Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997). To measure child adjustment, children aged 11 and older were additionally asked to complete the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (Goodman, 1997).

## **2.4 Procedure**

### *Ethical Approval & Access to Prisons*

Ethical approval for the project was granted by the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge Ethics Committee, as well as the Lead Psychologist in the East of England Public Sector Prisons<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, access to the prisons in our sample was authorised by HM Prison Service. All of the research team members<sup>16</sup> who conducted interviews at Time 1 were CRB checked and security cleared

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<sup>15</sup> Giles McCathie, Lead Psychologist and Reducing Reoffending Lead, East of England Public Sector Prisons

by HM Prison Service. Three of the research team members<sup>17</sup> had additionally undergone a vetting process and “key talks” at HMPs Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, and Wormwood Scrubs which enabled them to have access to keys in those prisons.

### *Advisory Group*

The project’s Advisory Group comprised seven people<sup>18</sup> who had a range of experience and expertise related to prisoners and their families. Terms of Reference were established which outlined the purpose of the Advisory Group, and these were to: (1) provide support and advice to the research team on strategic and operational issues; (2) contribute to the research by sharing their own experiences and expertise; (3) provide feedback on draft documents and reports; and (4) assist in promoting the dissemination of the research findings. Advisory Group meetings were held quarterly each year at either the Institute of Criminology or Ormiston’s office in Cambridge.

### **Time 1 Participant Recruitment**

Letters were sent to the governors of each prison in our sample, requesting their support for the research. Where possible, the governors appointed prison staff to liaise with the research team and help facilitate access to prisoners.<sup>19</sup> For the prisons which used Ormiston’s services (i.e., HMPs Bedford, Blundeston, Chelmsford, Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, Norwich, and Wayland), Ormiston staff assisted with participant recruitment.

Due to considerable variations in the prison policies and regimes of the prisons in our sample, it was necessary to employ different methods of recruitment. Each of these methods is described in detail below: *targeted in person*, *targeted letter*, *general association*, and *general visits*.

#### *1) Targeted in Person (HMPs Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Wellingborough, and Wormwood Scrubs)*

The ‘targeted in person’ method was employed at HMPs Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Wellingborough, and Wormwood Scrubs. Here, initial contact was made via imprisoned fathers and was

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<sup>16</sup> Hilary Bagshaw (Ormiston), Sue Clifton (Ormiston), Caroline Lanskey (Institute of Criminology), Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology), Gill Pugh (Ormiston) and Karen Souza (Institute of Criminology)

<sup>17</sup> Lucy Markson (Institute of Criminology), Gillian Pugh (Ormiston) and Karen Souza (Institute of Criminology)

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A for a list of Advisory Group members.

<sup>19</sup> Due to high staff turnover in the Prison Service, the liaisons were not always the same individuals.

carried out in two steps. First, prison and Ormiston staff used the *Prison National Offender Management Information System* (P-NOMIS) to identify prisoners who fitted the research criteria in terms of sentence length and release date. Prisoners who were serving sentences for sexual offences or had Harassment/Public Protection Orders against them were screened out for family protection issues. The names and prison wings of the shortlisted prisoners were then compiled into lists which were forwarded to the research team. These lists were generated approximately every one to two months.

Given that NOMS does not systematically record information on the children and families of prisoners, the research team carried out further screening by speaking to the prisoners directly. At HMPs Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, and Wormwood Scrubs, the research team members who had access to keys independently visited the prisoners in the prison wings or at the workshops to carry out further screening. At HMP Hollesley Bay, the shortlisted prisoners were called to the Resettlement Office where the research team carried out further screening face-to-face.<sup>20</sup>

Prisoners who had been shortlisted initially based on sentence length and release date were further cross-checked against additional eligibility criteria to screen out prisoners who:

- did not have children/step-children;
- did not have any contact with their child(ren)/step-children;
- had children aged 19 or over;
- had children on the Child Protection Register (or Child Protection Plan);
- were foreign nationals.

In all five prisons (i.e., HMPs Edmunds Hill, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Wellingborough, and Wormwood Scrubs), prisoners who passed the second screening process (and thus, met the full research criteria) were given an information booklet about the research and asked to complete a consent form for participation (thus, first consent was given by imprisoned fathers). In addition to providing their name, prison number and expected release date, the imprisoned fathers were asked to provide information about their families (i.e., (ex)partner's name, address, telephone number, and best time to contact, as well as their children's names and ages). Using the information provided by the fathers, the research team contacted their families to inform them about the research and invited them to take part. After

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<sup>20</sup> This was deemed as the most efficient method, as HMP Hollesley Bay is an open prison (i.e., prisoners worked anywhere within, or outside, the prison during the day).

the mothers gave their consent and an interview date, time and location was agreed (i.e., *second consent was obtained*), interviews with the fathers were arranged.

### 2) *Targeted External (HMPs Bedford, The Mount, Wayland)*

The 'targeted external' method was implemented in HMPs Bedford, The Mount and Wayland and refers to recruitment that was carried out "externally" by Ormiston and Community Links staff<sup>21</sup>. Here, initial contact was made via prisoners. Again, prison and Ormiston staff used P-NOMIS to identify prisoners who fitted the research criteria in terms of sentence length and release date, and prisoners who were serving sentences for sexual offences or had Harassment/Public Protection Orders against them were screened out. The names and prison wings of the shortlisted prisoners were then compiled into lists which were forwarded to the research team.

The follow-up process was a dual-strategy approach. In one approach, letters were sent to the prisoners who had been shortlisted initially, and then Ormiston and Community Links staff followed up to seek consent from those who were eligible to take part. In the second approach, the shortlisted prisoners were invited to attend an information session given by the research team in the visits halls. For those who met the full eligibility criteria and consented to take part (i.e., first consent was given by imprisoned fathers), the next steps were the same as in the *Targeted in Person* strategy (see above).

### 3) *General Association (HMPs Norwich, Pentonville)*

Recruitment at HMPs Norwich and Pentonville was carried out in the Local Discharge Unit (LDU) and Resettlement Units (e.g., Britannia House). First, Ormiston staff identified prisoners who had used Ormiston services (i.e., crèche, 'Storybook Dads'<sup>22</sup>, parenting courses, children's visits) as this indicated that these prisoners had children. Staff then screened these prisoners against the research criteria of sentence length and release date and then forwarded those who were shortlisted to the research team. To follow up, the research team approached prisoners during Association either at the LDU or through pre-arranged legal visits to carry out further screening for eligibility. For prisoners who met the full eligibility criteria and consented to take part (i.e., first consent was given by imprisoned fathers), the next steps were the same as the *Targeted in Person* and *Targeted External* strategies (see above).

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<sup>21</sup> Due to issues regarding security and staff availability in these prisons, the Research Team were unable to see the prisoners independently.

<sup>22</sup> 'Storybook Dads' is a registered charity which enables fathers in prison to record bedtime stories to send to their children.

#### *4) General Visits (HMPs Blundeston, Chelmsford, Norwich)*

The 'general visits' method was used at HMPs Blundeston, Chelmsford, and Norwich, and refers to recruitment of families via visitors' centres (thus, first contact was made with the mothers). At HMPs Blundeston and Norwich, mothers and fathers were approached by the research team in the visitors' centres and visits halls. For those who met the full eligibility criteria and consented to take part, the next steps were the same as in the strategies above. At HMP Chelmsford, Ormiston staff identified prisoners who had used Ormiston services (e.g., parenting courses and children's visits) as this indicated that these prisoners had children. Then, Ormiston staff approached prisoners and their families during visits to seek consent from those who were eligible and willing to take part (thus constituting 'first and second consent'). Ormiston staff then forwarded the completed consent forms to the research team, who arranged the interview dates, times and locations.

#### *5) Advertising*

An advertisement was placed in the national prisoners' newspaper *Inside Time* for two months. The advertisement provided details about the research, as well as the research team's contact details. Prisoners who were interested in taking part were asked to contact the research team to confirm their eligibility.

#### *Time 1 Recruitment Records and Statistics*

Figure 1 depicts the recruitment process from the point of referral (i.e., first contact) to the final stage of the interviews being carried out at Time 1. Records of recruitment were kept to document the number of: referrals received from each prison; participants who were eligible to take part; participants who consented to take part; and those who had declined. These statistics are presented below.

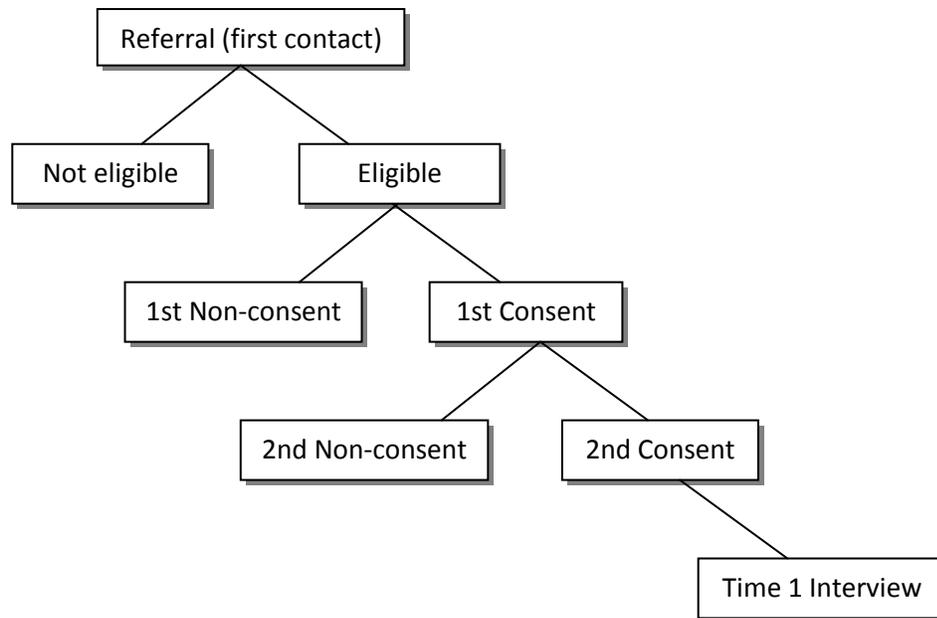


Figure 1. Recruitment process from referral (first contact) to interviews at Time 1

*Recruitment statistics by prison*

Table 2 presents the statistics on methods of recruitment by prison at Time 1. The ‘targeted in person’ method yielded the highest percentage of total referrals (37.7%). Here, the highest number of referrals came from HMP Edmunds Hill (89 out of 252), followed by HMP Highpoint (71 out of 252), and HMP Hollesley Bay (65 out of 252).<sup>23</sup> ‘General visits’<sup>24</sup> and the *Inside Time* advertisement<sup>25</sup> produced the least number of referrals, which combined, comprised around 10% of the total number of referrals (i.e., 69 out of 668).

<sup>23</sup> The decision to extend our sample to include London-based prisons was made part-way through data collection. As such, the deadline for Time 1 had elapsed before full recruitment could be carried out at HMP Wellingborough and at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, hence the low number of referrals from these prisons.

<sup>24</sup> The low number of referrals from HMP Chelmsford reflects the fact that most prisoners did not fit our sentence length and release date criteria (Note: HMP Chelmsford is a local prison in which the majority of prisoners are serving sentences of less than 12 months).

<sup>25</sup> Interviews could not be arranged with the three respondents of the *Inside Time* advertisement because one was released before access could be arranged, and two were foreign nationals and therefore, did not fit the eligibility criteria.

Table 2. Statistics on methods of recruitment by prison at Time 1

| Method                           | HM Prison       | Referral/<br>First contact | % of<br>total<br>referrals | Eligible   | %<br>eligible <sup>†</sup> | First<br>Consent | % first<br>consent <sup>**</sup> | Second<br>Consent <sup>***</sup> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Targeted in person               | Edmunds Hill    | 89                         |                            | 19         |                            | 14               |                                  | 8                                |
|                                  | Highpoint       | 71                         |                            | 34         |                            | 17               |                                  | 8                                |
|                                  | Hollesley Bay   | 65                         |                            | 32         |                            | 20               |                                  | 6                                |
|                                  | Wellingborough  | 22                         |                            | 7          |                            | 3                |                                  | 1                                |
|                                  | Wormwood Scrubs | 5                          |                            | 1          |                            | 0                |                                  | 0                                |
| <i>Total targeted in person</i>  |                 | <b>252</b>                 | <b>37.7</b>                | <b>93</b>  | <b>36.9</b>                | <b>54</b>        | <b>58.1</b>                      | <b>23</b>                        |
| Targeted external                | Bedford         | 46                         |                            | 0          |                            | 0                |                                  | 0                                |
|                                  | The Mount       | 124                        |                            | 73         |                            | 6                |                                  | 7                                |
|                                  | Wayland         | 59                         |                            | 26         |                            | 12               |                                  | 5                                |
| <i>Total targeted external</i>   |                 | <b>229</b>                 | <b>34.3</b>                | <b>99</b>  | <b>43.2</b>                | <b>18</b>        | <b>18.2</b>                      | <b>12</b>                        |
| General association              | Norwich         | 100                        |                            | 39         |                            | 25               |                                  | 13                               |
|                                  | Pentonville     | 18                         |                            | 6          |                            | 1                |                                  | 1                                |
| <i>Total general association</i> |                 | <b>118</b>                 | <b>17.7</b>                | <b>45</b>  | <b>38.1</b>                | <b>26</b>        | <b>57.8</b>                      | <b>14</b>                        |
| General visits                   | Blundeston      | 33                         |                            | 10         |                            | 4                |                                  | 3                                |
|                                  | Chelmsford      | 31                         |                            | 3          |                            | 1                |                                  | 1                                |
|                                  | Norwich         | 2                          |                            | 2          |                            | 0                |                                  | 1                                |
| <i>Total general visits</i>      |                 | <b>66</b>                  | <b>9.9</b>                 | <b>15</b>  | <b>22.7</b>                | <b>5</b>         | <b>33.3</b>                      | <b>5</b>                         |
| Inside Time advert               | --              | <b>3</b>                   | <b>.4</b>                  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>                   | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>                         | <b>0</b>                         |
| <b>Overall total</b>             |                 | <b>668</b>                 | <b>100</b>                 | <b>252</b> |                            | <b>103</b>       |                                  | <b>54</b>                        |

<sup>†</sup> Refers to % eligible out of the number referred. <sup>\*\*</sup> Refers to % first consent out of the number eligible. <sup>\*\*\*</sup> Second consent equals total number of family sets.

### Eligibility and consent

Figure 2 presents the recruitment statistics for Time 1. Across the 13 prisons, a total of 668 prisoners were approached based on referrals from either prison or Ormiston staff. Of these prisoners, 37.7% (252 out of 668) met the research eligibility criteria, and of those who were eligible, 40.9% (103 out of 252) initially consented to take part. Second consent was obtained for 54 (out of 103) families. Thus, our sample at Time 1 consisted of 54 family sets, and interviews were conducted with 54 fathers, 54 partners and 45 children.

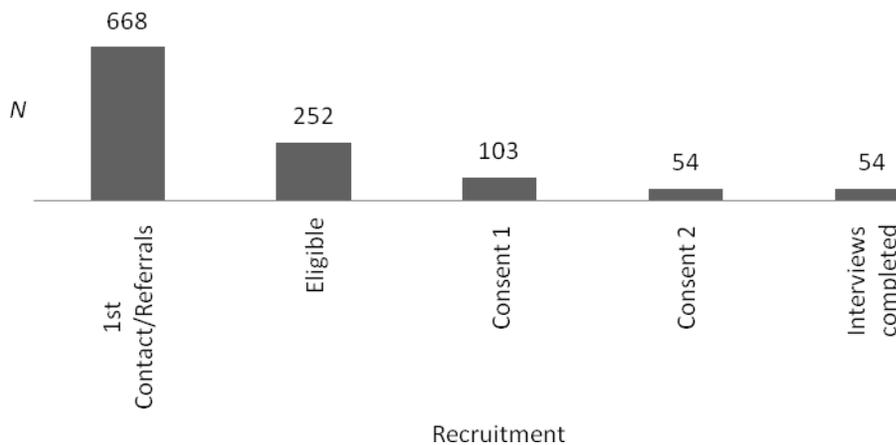


Figure 2. Recruitment statistics for Time 1

In terms of the prisoners who were *not eligible* to take part in the research (416 out of 668), the reason for their non-eligibility are presented in Table 3 below. Importantly, the highest proportion of prisoners who were not eligible had reported that they did not have any children (40.1%), and a further 9.6% reported that they did not have contact with their children. In addition, 11.8% of prisoners were deemed ineligible because they were either released before Time 1 interviews could be carried out, or their release date was beyond the timescale of data collection for Time 1.

Table 3. Reasons for prisoners' non-eligibility at Time 1

| Reason                         | Per cent<br>(%) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| No children                    | 40.1            |
| Release date too soon/late     | 11.8            |
| No contact with children       | 9.6             |
| Children over 18               | 6.0             |
| Does not fit sentence criteria | 3.4             |
| Out of catchment area          | 3.1             |
| No contact with partner        | 1.7             |
| Restraining Order              | 1.4             |
| Other                          | 5.8             |
| Missing data                   | 17.1            |

*Note.* 'Other' reasons for non-eligibility included: non-English speaking, non-parent carer, foreign national, sexual assault against partner.

## 2.5 Data Collection

### *Risk Management Strategy*

A procedure for managing potential risks in data collection was developed in advance by the research team in collaboration with Ormiston (see Appendix B). This risk management strategy was implemented at both Time 1 and Time 2. It outlined procedures to be followed by interviewers before, during and after their visits with families. Where possible, the research team liaised with Ormiston and prison staff before visits to identify any potential risks. In addition, a "buddy system" was implemented whereby a designated contact person was notified of the interviewers' safe arrival and departure from the interviews. Interviewing in pairs also provided additional resources (e.g., someone to play games with the children) during the parents' interviews.

## **Time 1 Main Study**

Time 1 interviews with imprisoned fathers, mothers and children were carried out separately by six trained interviewers. At the start of each interview, the research team reviewed the “Interviewer Introduction Sheet” with participants (e.g., see Appendix C). All of the participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. The participants were told that no identifying information would be written on any of the interview documents to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. The procedures for interviewing fathers, mothers and the children were identical to those implemented in the pilot study (see ‘Time 1 pilot study’ above). Forty per cent ( $n = 14$ ) of the children interviewed who were aged eight and older and knew that their father was in prison completed the questionnaire on perceived and experienced stigma (adapted from the *Rejection Experiences* scale in Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997).

At the end of the interviews, the fathers and their families were each given a list of support services and a leaflet which contained the research team’s contact details. Each family was compensated for their time with a £10 shopping voucher after completing the Time 1 interviews.

### *Research Teams’ Observations and Field notes*

After each interview, the research team recorded field notes on the families. These provided qualitative comments on the researchers’ experiences with participants, as well as observations of the families’ interaction and home environment. In addition, the interviewers rated each of the participants on the dimensions of physical appearance, interpersonal communication, and articulacy.

## **Time 2 Main Study**

### **Time 2 Participant Recruitment**

Approximately three months after the Time 1 interviews were completed, a ‘thank you’ mug was sent to each family in appreciation of their participation. This was accompanied by a letter to remind them of the Time 2 interviews, and also to ask the families to contact the research team if they were planning to move house.

To help facilitate recruitment at Time 2, a weekly organizer was devised which contained a list of all of the families from Time 1. This list was ranked according to the imprisoned fathers' release date to indicate the order in which the Time 2 interviews were to be carried out.

At Time 2, for continuity, each research team member contacted the same fathers and mothers whom they interviewed at Time 1. In the first instance, the families were contacted via the telephone numbers and addresses that were used at Time 1. If first contact was successful, the date, time and location of the interviews were arranged with the families, including the fathers if they were living in the same household. In cases where the fathers were not living in the same household, the mothers were asked to provide his current contact details and their interviews were arranged separately.

If the mothers and/or fathers were not contactable using the telephone numbers and addresses from Time 1, a number of alternative recruitment strategies were used:

- 1) the research team liaised with the Probation Service to trace the fathers' current contact details;
- 2) the research team liaised with HM Prison Service to find out whether any of the fathers were back in prison;
- 3) the fathers' and mothers' next of kin were contacted to acquire their current contact details<sup>26</sup>; and finally
- 4) the research team called in person at the addresses given at Time 1.

As shown in Figure 3, first contact was made successfully with at least one member in 24 of the 54 families from Time 1. For 25 families, at least one of the family members could not be contacted and therefore, the additional recruitment strategies described above were used. Despite this, in seven families, at least one parent could not be contacted.

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<sup>26</sup> When consent was obtained at Time 1, the participants provided additional contact details of a relative or friend who the research team could contact for information at Time 2.

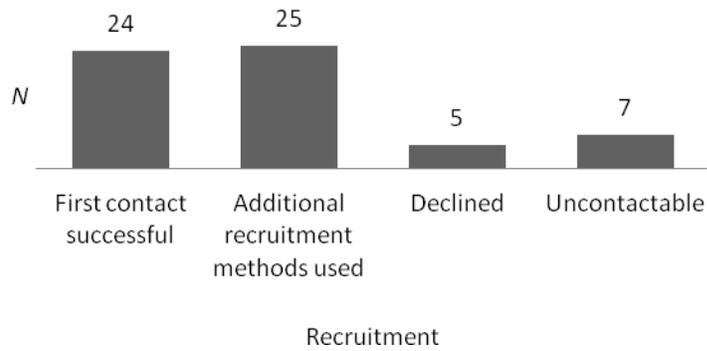


Figure 3. Recruitment statistics for Time 2

Table 4 shows the retention rates of the participants from Time 1, which was 74.1% of fathers (i.e., 40 out of 54), 90.7% of (ex)partners (i.e., 49 out of 54), and 86.7% of children (i.e., 39 out of 45). This represented an overall retention rate of 74.1% for complete family sets (i.e., 40 out of 54 families from Time 1).

Table 4. Retention rates for fathers, mothers, children and family sets from Time 1 to Time 2

|                      | Time 1 | Time 2 | Retention rate (%) |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Fathers              | 54     | 40     | 74.1               |
| Mothers              | 54     | 49     | 90.7               |
| Children included    | 90     | 80     | 88.9               |
| Children interviewed | 45     | 39     | 86.7               |
| Family sets          | 54     | 40     | 74.1               |

#### Time 2 Data Collection

The risk management strategy and procedure for data collection at Time 2 were the same as that of Time 1. Interviews were carried out at a date, time and location convenient to the families (typically in their homes). Interviews with fathers, mothers and children were conducted using the respective Time 2 interview schedules and standardised measures. Again, interviews with fathers and mothers took approximately one hour and 20 minutes to complete, and the children's interviews took approximately 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the age of the children. Forty nine per cent ( $n = 17$ ) of the children interviewed who were aged eight and older and knew that their father had been in prison completed the questionnaire on perceived and experienced stigma (adapted from the *Rejection Experiences* scale in Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997).

As a result of barriers that prevented the research team from conducting interviews face-to-face with some participants, interviews for four fathers and one child were conducted over the telephone, and in one case, the father and mother self-completed the interviews and returned them by post.

At the end of the interviews, the fathers and their families were each given a list of support services and a leaflet which contained the research team’s contact details. Each family was compensated for their time with a £25 shopping voucher after completing the Time 2 interviews.

### **Fathers’ Participation at Time 1 and Time 2**

Twenty six per cent ( $n = 14$ ) of fathers from the Time 1 sample did not take part at Time 2. Of these fathers who did not take part, nine declined individually, and five fathers and partners declined together. T-tests, chi-square and Fisher’s exact tests were conducted to compare the characteristics of fathers who completed both Time 1 and Time 2 interviews and those who declined to take part at Time 2.

Results indicated that there were no significant differences between fathers who participated at Time 1 and those who participated at Time 2 with regards to: age, relationship with partner, number of previous convictions, income, employment before prison, alcohol and drug use, accommodation arranged after release, difficulties anticipated after release, support from organisations, and participation in offending behaviour and parenting programmes. Therefore, the drop-out seemed to have no systematic impact on the composition of the sample. However, a Fisher’s exact test (two-tailed) indicated a significant difference between fathers’ ethnicity and participation at Time 2,  $p < .05$  (see Table 5).

*Table 5. Fathers’ participation at Time 1 and Time 2 by ethnicity*

|                        |     | Fathers’ ethnicity |            | Total     |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------|------------|-----------|
|                        |     | White British      | BAME       |           |
| Participated at Time 1 | Yes | 39 (72.2%)         | 15 (27.9%) | 54 (100%) |
| Participated at Time 2 | Yes | 32 (80.0%)         | 8 (20.0%)  | 40 (100%) |
|                        | No  | 7 (50.0%)          | 7 (50.0%)  | 14 (100%) |

### *Fathers' Ethnicity and Time 1 Results*

Analyses were conducted to compare the Time 1 results of fathers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) and those who were White British. There were no significant differences in comparative analyses of fathers' ages, relationship with partner, previous convictions, income, employment before prison, alcohol and drug use, and attendance in offending behaviour and parenting programmes.

Independent samples t-tests revealed significant differences between the two groups with regards to fathers' expectations of their adjustment after prison,  $t(51) = 2.10, p < .10$ , and their anticipated difficulties in finding employment,  $t(47) = -2.70, p < .01$ . BAME fathers anticipated less positive adjustment and greater difficulties finding employment than fathers who were White British.

*Table 6.* Fathers' expectations of post-release adjustment and employment prospects by ethnicity

|  | Fathers' ethnicity | M<br>(SD)      |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| How well do you think you will adjust when you are released from prison?<br>(Scale: 1 = <i>Not at all well</i> , 5 = <i>Extremely well</i> )               | BAME               | 3.61<br>(.79)  |
|  | White British      | 4.13<br>(.80)  |
| How difficult do you think finding a job will be for you after your release?<br>(Scale: 1 = <i>Not at all difficult</i> , 5 = <i>Extremely difficult</i> ) | BAME               | 3.62<br>(1.04) |
|  | White British      | 2.47<br>(1.36) |

M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

## **2.6 Inferences from the Sampling Procedures**

The methodology employed in this research was a multi-faceted approach to carrying out a longitudinal study of prisoner resettlement, in which data were triangulated from the fathers, mothers and children of the same family. Some important learning points are discussed below.

- The recruitment statistics from Time 1 show that the 'targeted in person' method yielded the largest number of referrals that led to first (and second) consent. This suggests that direct access (i.e., access to keys, lists, and face-to-face contact) is the most effective method of recruiting imprisoned fathers and their families.

- Recruitment at Time 1 was most successful in those prisons where Ormiston staff were based and where prison staff were appointed as liaisons. This highlights the importance of establishing strong links with gatekeepers at the outset.
- The statistics on prisoners' non-eligibility for participation indicated that more than one-third of the prisoners who were referred in our sample did not have children. Thus, the fact that NOMS currently does not have a systematic method of recording information on prisoners' families has implications for assessment of information, and can also impede targeted service provision for imprisoned fathers.
- The challenges of following up families at Time 2 highlights the difficulties in tracking ex-prisoners and their families beyond the prison gates. As such, this could prevent service providers such as Ormiston from targeting high-risk families that could benefit from assistance during the difficult period of resettlement.
- The findings on the characteristics of fathers who dropped out at Time 2 suggest that the current study may not fully represent the resettlement outcomes of fathers and families from ethnic minorities and may indicate that extra care is needed to ensure that the participation of these respondents is maintained in the course of a longitudinal project.
- Finally, many families that participated in this research were not typical of families in the traditional sense (i.e., where parents are married, living together, and jointly child-rearing). This is particularly relevant to research on prisoners and their families as it underscores the complexities of how the concept of "family" is defined within this population.

### 3 RESULTS

The results in this chapter are presented thematically, to highlight the main interests of the study. First, a thematic, descriptive overview of the sample is presented. Statistically significant differences between fathers' and mothers' reports from Time 1 to Time 2 are also reported. We used  $p < .10$  for the level of significance testing because many of the analyses are exploratory in nature and our sample size is modest (Cohen, 1992).

#### 3.1 Descriptive Data

##### *Sample Demographics*

Our sample at Time 1 comprised 54 imprisoned fathers, 54 mothers, and 90 children who were included<sup>27</sup>. The mean age of the fathers was 31.37 ( $SD = 9.77$ ), with a range from 19 to 56. The mean age of the mothers was 28.63 ( $SD = 7.45$ ), with a range from 19 to 45. Of the 90 children who were included<sup>28</sup>, 52.2% were male and 47.8% were female. Their mean age at Time 1 was 5.85 ( $SD = 4.33$ ), with a range from nine months to 18 years. The ethnicity of the sample was as follows: of the fathers 72.2% were White British, 16.6% were Black, 3.7% were Mixed and 7.5% were of other ethnicity; of the mothers, 81.5% were White British, 11.1% were Black, 1.9% were Mixed and 5.6% were of other ethnicity; of the children, 73.0% were White British, 11.2% were Black, 1.1% were Asian, 10.1% were Mixed and 4.5% were of other ethnicity.

Our sample at Time 2 comprised 40 fathers, 49 mothers and 80 children who were included. The mean age of the fathers was 32.33 ( $SD = 10.39$ ), with a range from 19 to 56. The mean age of the mothers was 29.14 ( $SD = 7.64$ ), with a range from 19 to 46. Of the 80 children who were included, 48.8% were male and 51.3% were female. Their mean age was 6.59 ( $SD = 4.41$ ), with a range from one to 18. The ethnicity of the families was as follows: of the fathers, 80% were White British, 17.5% were Black and 2.5% were Mixed; of the mothers, 82.5% were White British, 7.5% were Black, 2.5% were Mixed, 7.5% were of other ethnicity; of the children, 78.3% were White British, 8.7% were Black, 1.4% were Asian, 10.1% were Mixed, 1.4% were of other ethnicity.

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<sup>27</sup> Data were collected on 90 children (including 1 unborn baby), 45 of whom were interviewed at Time 1.

<sup>28</sup> Data for children, as reported by the mothers.

Forty of the 54 families from Time 1 were successfully followed up at Time 2 (see Table 4 for statistics on retention). Therefore, subsequent analyses in this chapter are based on the 40 complete family sets that were followed up from Time 1 to Time 2. This included 40 fathers, 40 mothers, and 69 children<sup>29</sup>.

### *Fathers' Sentences and Criminal History*

The highest proportion of imprisoned fathers were convicted for violence against a person (35.0%), followed by acquisitive crimes (i.e., burglary, robbery, theft and handling) at 27.5%, and drug offences (17.5%). They had served an average of 2.32 years ( $SD = 1.27$ ) at the time of the interview. On average, the fathers had 12.35 ( $SD = 13.84$ ) previous convictions. They had received an average of 3.63 ( $SD = 3.44$ ) prison sentences (including their current prison sentence), and had spent an average of 4.66 years ( $SD = 5.13$ ) in prison in their lifetime. At Time 2, seven fathers (17.5%) had been recalled to prison or convicted for new offences.

### *Socioeconomic Factors*

Seventy two per cent of fathers reported that they had accommodation arranged for their release from prison, while 28.0% did not. Table 7 shows the parents' living arrangements at Time 1 and Time 2. A higher proportion of fathers than mothers reported that they were living together before his imprisonment. Around two-thirds of fathers and mothers planned to live together after the fathers' release. However, at Time 2, fewer couples were living together than expected at Time 1. This finding could be due to broken down relationships or the father's sentence or release conditions such as compulsory residence in hostels for a period after release. For example, one father commented, "*Lisa's built her own life here with the kids. I would just disrupt them and their behaviour. We tried at first when I came out but it didn't work out.*" Another father stated, "*Because I am on tag and restrictions regarding living with them. I spend time with the kids at weekends and holidays.*" One mother said, "*Tom went to a bail hostel. Social Services were involved and said he couldn't live at the same address as Louise because of his history of drug abuse.*" Some mothers commented that they "*...wanted to make sure he'd really changed first*" before residing in the same household after his release.

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<sup>29</sup> Of the 69 children, 35 were interviewed at Time 2.

Table 7. Parents' living arrangements at Time 1 and Time 2

|                                     | Per cent (%) |         |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------|
|                                     | Fathers      | Mothers |
| Living together at Time 1           | 61.5         | 52.5    |
| Planning to live together at Time 2 | 64.9         | 65.8    |
| Living together at Time 2           | 55.0         | 57.5    |

In terms of employment, fewer fathers were employed after prison (34.2%) compared to before prison (55.0%). The fathers' income had also decreased from before to after prison (see Table 8), and this decrease was statistically significant,  $t(27) = 3.47, p < .01$ . In contrast, more mothers were employed after the fathers' imprisonment compared to before (22.5% and 17.5%, respectively). The mothers' income also increased from before to after the fathers' imprisonment (see Table 8), and this difference was statistically significant,  $t(34) = -2.63, p < .05$ . Fathers were receiving more benefits at Time 2 than at Time 1 (79.5% and 60.5%, respectively), whereas the proportion of mothers receiving benefits did not change from Time 1 to Time 2 (97.5%).

Table 8. Fathers' and mothers' weekly income at Time 1 and Time 2

|                   | Fathers             |                     | Mothers           |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|                   | M<br>(SD)           | M<br>(SD)           | M<br>(SD)         | M<br>(SD)           |
|                   | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2 <sup>a</sup> | Time 1            | Time 2 <sup>a</sup> |
| Weekly income (£) | 317.08<br>(191.64)  | 205.87<br>(199.42)  | 180.09<br>(79.63) | 211.41<br>(111.31)  |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>Extreme outliers were removed from the analyses.

Fathers gave various reasons for being unemployed at Time 2. Some cited their criminal record as problematic, "...applied for loads, can't get them when they see my record." Others commented on a lack of available work (e.g., "I can't find a job. I've got experience so it's not that.") and other practical problems (e.g., "No transport, too expensive."). Fathers who did not intend to seek work after their release cited reasons related to illness (e.g., "Because of medical reasons. Will do voluntary work at local library two days a week - help from NACRO to get placement.") and adjusting to life outside (e.g., "Not straight away, need time to adjust.").

Fathers who were employed reported various types of work since release. Some were longer term (e.g., "Had a full-time job (scaffolder), worked all through release period."), while for others, this was new

employment (e.g., “Just started work again (roofing), been doing it for one week. First work I’ve done since release.”).

A number of mothers described undertaking training for professions such as teaching and beauty therapy. The most frequently cited reason for unemployment by mothers was being a full-time carer (e.g., “No time. Stressful. I’m a full-time mum.”).

### Parents’ Relationship

At Time 1, 82.5% of fathers and mothers reported that they were in a relationship or married. Fathers reported that the average length of their relationship was 6.88 years ( $SD = 5.48$ ). At Time 2, fewer fathers and mothers reported that they were in a relationship or married (72.5% and 67.5%, respectively). Fathers’ and mothers’ ratings of their satisfaction with their sexual relationship and the overall quality of their relationship are reported in Table 9. The mean scores indicate that the partners were, on average, “somewhat satisfied” with both their physical relationship and the overall quality of their relationship. The parents did not differ significantly from each other on these ratings. Their own ratings also did not differ significantly from Time 1 to Time 2.

Table 9. Fathers’ and mothers’ ratings of satisfaction with sexual relationship and overall quality of relationship

|  | Fathers             |                | Mothers             |                |
|--|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
|  | M<br>(SD)           |                | M<br>(SD)           |                |
|  | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2         | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2         |
| Overall quality of relationship <sup>b</sup>       | 3.42<br>(1.08)      | 3.68<br>(1.09) | 3.19<br>(1.28)      | 3.43<br>(1.43) |
| Satisfaction with sexual relationship <sup>c</sup> | 3.94<br>(1.06)      | 3.79<br>(.99)  | 3.69<br>(1.21)      | 3.71<br>(.98)  |

M = Mean  $SD$  = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>This refers to relationships before prison. <sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1= Not at all good, 5 = Extremely good. <sup>c</sup>Question was not asked of parents who had been separated for more than 6 months. Scale range was 1 = Not at all satisfied, 5 = Extremely satisfied.

Some mothers’ expressed positive views about their relationship with the father at Time 1: “I love him to bits. He’s the best person you can meet;” “We never argue. Quite close. We don’t bottle up problems, we sort out problems.” But some also cited stressful relationships, sometimes due to the father’s drug use and a lack of trust: “...but his drugs, it’s a big issue. He’s done certain things - do they not feel aware of it?” “I worry about other girls. He lies all the time.”

The figures in Table 9 suggest that parents' views of their relationship corresponded with each other. There were also strong, significant correlations between the parents' ratings. For example, in terms of their overall relationship before the father's imprisonment, both views correlated at  $r = .61, p < .001$ , and after his release, at  $r = .88, p < .001$ . Similarly, with regards to their sexual relationship the relation at Time 1 was  $r = .59, p < .001$ , and at Time 2,  $r = .47, p < .05$ .

Many fathers described their relationship with their partner before prison positively: *"Great. Very happy, just looking forward to being together for a long time and being a family;" "Blinding, fantastic...consistently good. Only had rows about money, and children playing us against each other. Best mates, soul mates."* Problems with drugs and alcohol were also cited as problematic for relationships: *"Very strained because of my drug use. Caused stress, aggravation from neighbours;" "Drinking caused problems and arguing. Violent fights."*

At Time 2, some mothers said their relationship with the father was better than before he went to prison: *"He's a lot more home/family oriented than before. Not rowing as much which is good. He plays with his daughters;" "It's better, he's changed. Wasn't a very caring person before, prison made him grow up and be a man. Had less arguments since he came out."* For other mothers, the situation was mixed: *"When he first came out, it was good. I wouldn't let him live here, but he spent time here. Was very romantic, very involved with Tina. But as soon as he went back on the drugs it all fell apart. He tries to manipulate me, says it's my fault;" "Fine to start with, he was away a long time. I think he thought things would be different. He was frustrated because he couldn't find work, had a few drinks, started gambling to get some money, losing. Goes into self-destruct mode."* Fathers' comments about the quality of their relationship after prison varied. Some cited improvements (e.g., *"Got better since prison. We had so much time apart, realised what we had. Plus not drinking so no money wasted."*), while others described a negative relationship (e.g., *"Did my own thing before prison. When I came out she didn't let me do nothing."*).

#### *Parenting and Involvement with Children*

Table 10 shows fathers' and mothers' ratings of their own parenting approaches, and the fathers' involvement with the children, at Time 1 and Time 2. The *Discipline* subscale comprised eight items which measured parents' reported use of disciplinary strategies (e.g., *yell or scold*) for infractions of family rules. The total score range was 0 to 40, with high scores representing higher frequencies of disciplinary action. The *Praise* subscale comprised nine items which measured parents' reported use of

positive praise and support for good behaviour (e.g., *give your child some reward*). The total score range was 0 to 45, with high scores indicating higher frequencies of praise and support. With regards to the ratings on fathers' involvement with the children, an overall involvement score was computed based on five items (i.e., helping with school work, discipline, daily care, play/leisure, and discussion and decision making).

*Table 10.* Fathers' and mothers' ratings on parenting and father's involvement with the children at Time 1 and Time 2

| Scales  | Fathers             |                 | Mothers             |                 |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|   | M<br>(SD)           |                 | M<br>(SD)           |                 |
|   | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2          | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2          |
| Fathers' involvement with the children <sup>b</sup> | 4.31<br>(.73)       | 3.84<br>(1.12)  | 3.61<br>(1.00)      | 3.50<br>(1.29)  |
| Use of discipline in parenting <sup>c</sup>         | 11.86<br>(5.79)     | 11.55<br>(4.15) | 14.56<br>(4.73)     | 14.29<br>(3.62) |
| Use of praise in parenting <sup>d</sup>             | 34.32<br>(7.43)     | 35.94<br>(4.79) | 36.06<br>(4.73)     | 36.63<br>(4.69) |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. *Note.* <sup>a</sup>Refers to before fathers' imprisonment. <sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*. <sup>c</sup>Total score range was 0 – 40. <sup>d</sup>Total score range was 0 – 45.

Both parents reported that fathers were less involved with their children than prior to imprisonment. For fathers the difference was statistically significant,  $t(62) = 4.15, p < .001$ , while mothers' reports were not. Furthermore, at Time 1, fathers reported significantly higher levels of involvement with their children than the mothers reported of his involvement,  $t(119) = -4.60, p < .001$ . However, at Time 2, both parents' ratings of the fathers' involvement did not differ significantly from each other.

With regards to parenting, fathers' and mothers' reports of discipline and praise did not differ significantly from each other, and also did not differ between Time 1 and Time 2. Mothers reported significantly higher levels of discipline in their own parenting than did fathers at Time 1 and Time 2,  $t(70) = 2.16, p < .05$  and  $t(69) = 2.98, p < .01$ , respectively. A possible explanation for this finding is that mothers had to deal with their children's daily behaviour more often, which is substantiated by the mothers' reports of being the primary caregivers at both Time 1 and Time 2 (54.7% and 62.9%, respectively).

### Child Behaviour and Adjustment

Based on their mean ratings at Time 1, fathers and mothers expected, on average, that their children would adjust “very well” after the father’s release (scale ranged from 1 = *Not at all well* to 5 = *Extremely well*;  $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.01$  for fathers and  $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = .83$  for mothers). At Time 2, parents’ mean ratings of their children’s adjustment indicated that they thought their children had, indeed, adjusted “very well” ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .76$  and  $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ , respectively). This relative consistency between expectations and ratings after release was partially confirmed by the parents’ ratings of their children on the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)*; see Table 11).

Table 11. Fathers’ and mothers’ scoring of their children’s adjustment on the SDQ<sup>a</sup>

|                      | Mothers         |                | Difference | Fathers        |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
|                      | M<br>(SD)       | M<br>(SD)      |            | M<br>(SD)      |
|                      | Time 1          | Time 2         |            | Time 2         |
| Emotional Symptoms   | 2.97<br>(2.29)  | 2.28<br>(2.16) | n.s.       | 1.74<br>(1.93) |
| Conduct Problems     | 2.50<br>(1.88)  | 2.36<br>(1.94) | n.s.       | 1.79<br>(1.90) |
| Hyperactivity        | 4.87<br>(2.21)  | 3.83<br>(2.42) | n.s.       | 4.17<br>(3.15) |
| Peer Problems        | 1.80<br>(1.80)  | 1.46<br>(1.33) | *          | 1.23<br>(1.10) |
| Pro-social Behaviour | 7.88<br>(1.92)  | 7.61<br>(2.17) | n.s.       | 8.38<br>(1.90) |
| Total difficulties   | 12.15<br>(4.67) | 9.69<br>(5.64) | n.s.       | 8.93<br>(6.47) |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. \* $p < .10$ . Note. Fathers did not complete the SDQ at Time 1. <sup>a</sup>Each section of the SDQ contained five items which parents’ rated from 0 = *Not true* to 2 = *Certainly true*. ‘Total difficulties’ is the sum of Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity and Peer Problems. Total score range for Emotional symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity and Peer Problems was 0-10. Total score range for Total difficulties was 0-40.

Mean scores from fathers and mothers on Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems and Total Difficulties were relatively low at Time 1 and Time 2. Pro-social Behaviour scores were relatively high from both mothers and fathers. Across the SDQ subscales, on average, mothers’ SDQ scores for children decreased from Time 1 to Time 2. *Peer problems* were reported to be significantly lower at Time 2. A comparison of parents’ mean SDQ ratings at Time 2 indicated that with the exception of hyperactivity, fathers rated their children’s behaviour slightly more positively than mothers, although this difference was not statistically significant.

In terms of delinquent behaviour, at Time 1, three children between 10 and 18 years had received a police caution/warning, and one child had received a community punishment. In addition, six of the children interviewed (i.e., 17.1% of the total sample, 43.0% of children between 10 and 18 years) reported that they had tried alcohol, and one child (i.e., 2.9% of the total sample, and 7.0% of children between 10 and 18 years) reported to have tried drugs.

At Time 1, mothers' comments about their children were mixed. Some cited difficulties (e.g., "...trying it on, pushing boundaries. Lots of dreams about him coming home - wakes up upset, says he misses Dad, asks when he's coming home."), others said things had been difficult at first, but were improving (e.g., "Went downhill at first, then grew up a lot."), while others reported good behaviour and adjustment (e.g., "Strong, sensitive, adjusts very quickly."). Some mothers reported that their children had been involved in active bullying or victimisation (e.g., "Suffered at school - other kids nasty to her at primary school." and "She bullied other kids at first but fine now."). At Time 2, mothers generally gave relatively positive reports of their children's adjustment (e.g., "Pleased that he's home. Play fighting, happy").

#### *Physical and Mental Health*

Fathers' and mothers' reported physical health problems decreased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.24, p < .10$  and  $\chi^2(1) = 4.75, p < .05$ , respectively. The total score range in the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12; Goldberg & Williams, 1988), which measures psychological well-being, is 0 to 36 (where high scores indicate more problems). The fathers' mean score on the GHQ-12 at Time 1 was 12.45 ( $SD = 6.39$ ), and at Time 2 was 11.29 ( $SD = 8.88$ ), indicating low problems. Mothers' mean scores were 14.26 ( $SD = 7.19$ ) at Time 1, and 11.00 ( $SD = 6.74$ ) at Time 2, and this difference was statistically significant,  $t(38) = -2.36, p < .05$ . The findings indicated that both parents' physical and mental health improved after the fathers' release.

Indeed, fathers commented on how being in prison had worsened existing health problems (e.g., "Got worse, in more pain. Can't give right pain killers in D CAT, could've in C CAT."), or that new health problems had developed since prison (e.g., "Depression at start of sentence because I was away from family and children and being inside. Put on anti-depressants, learned to manage it now. But it was caused by being sent to prison."). Similarly, mothers also cited worsened existing psychological health problems since the father's imprisonment (e.g., "Worry a lot about Stuart. I've resumed meds since Stuart went to jail;" "Had to return to counselling, increase medication. Telling the children was

stressful.”). Some reported new health problems (e.g., “Diagnosed two months after he went away. My world just stopped, collapsed. I became an alcoholic.”).

Fathers’ and mothers’ comments supported the finding of improved mental health after the father’s release: “Being released made my anxiety and depression better, do not have to worry about things.” “I’m a lot happier now he’s around. Not so stressed with everything. He shares things with me, for example, he helps me with forms.” But some also described the impact of stress on their mental health: “On anti-depressants. Lots of worries outside prison, for example, looking for a job. Everything was done for you in prison;” “Cos he got back on drugs he’s messing with my head. Had high hopes it’d work out for us when he was released, but it hasn’t;” “Worrying about Ryan all the time - his dad should be here all the time. His dad will not be here for open evening at school. I feel let down by my ex-partner.”

#### Alcohol and Drug Use

Reported use of illegal drugs decreased from Time 1<sup>30</sup> to Time 2 for both fathers and mothers. Here, 70.0% of fathers and 25.0% of mothers reported illegal drug use during the year before the prison sentence. At Time 2, the figures were 25.0% of fathers and 10.0% of mothers. In addition, both fathers and mothers reported less alcohol use at Time 2<sup>31</sup> (Table 12), although the fathers’ alcohol use was significantly higher than that of the mothers. It should also be noted that the variance in alcohol consumption decreased substantially from Time 1 to Time 2. This suggests relatively positive development for the fathers and mothers. However, drug use at Time 2 may have been underreported.

Table 12. Fathers’ and mothers’ self-reported weekly alcohol units at Time 1 and Time 2

|                      | Fathers             |                  | Difference | Mothers             |                | Difference |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|------------|
|                      | M<br>(SD)           |                  |            | M<br>(SD)           |                |            |
|                      | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2           |            | Time 1 <sup>a</sup> | Time 2         |            |
| Weekly alcohol units | 49.21<br>(94.74)    | 16.60<br>(42.23) | **         | 10.00<br>(19.95)    | 2.62<br>(5.83) | **         |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. \*\* $p < .05$ . Note. <sup>a</sup>This refers to during the year before the fathers’ imprisonment for the current sentence.

Fathers’ qualitative comments supported the above finding that many had reduced their alcohol consumption: “Not every day, much less than before. Trying to stay away from temptation and doing

<sup>30</sup> Fathers and mothers were asked about use of drugs during the year before the father’s imprisonment.

<sup>31</sup> Fathers and mothers were asked about their alcohol consumption during the year before the father’s imprisonment.

well so far.” A minority of fathers reported that they were heavily using hard: “During release started with cocaine, then crack, then injecting crack, then heroin - £100 a day habit.”

At Time 2, many mothers reported that they did not drink or drank little alcohol: “Nothing usually, but just had bottle of wine with a friend recently.” One mother reported an increase in alcohol consumption: “Drinking more than when partner was in prison because we can go out together.” Some mothers cited that the fathers’ use of drugs and alcohol consumption after prison had caused problems for the family: “His alcohol use is the reason he’s gone back [to prison] again;” “Smokes weed. I don’t like it. Not a good use of money as it’s my money;” “All money came from thieving and went on drugs.”

#### Contact and Communication during Imprisonment

Table 13 shows the average amount of contact between the fathers, mothers and children at Time 1. The scale range for visits was 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*More than once a week*). The scale ranges for written correspondence and telephone calls was 0 (*Never*) to 8 (*More than once a day*).

Table 13. Amount of contact between fathers, mothers and children at Time 1

|                              | Fathers<br>M<br>(SD) | Mothers<br>M<br>(SD) | Children <sup>a</sup><br>M<br>(SD) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Contact</b>               |                      |                      |                                    |
| <b>Visits<sup>b</sup></b>    |                      |                      |                                    |
| Ordinary                     | 2.92<br>(1.83)       | 2.97<br>(1.75)       | 2.16<br>(1.87)                     |
| Family                       | .45<br>(.95)         | .43<br>(.86)         | .28<br>(.71)                       |
| Children’s                   | .89<br>(1.22)        | .63<br>(1.07)        | .75<br>(1.21)                      |
| Total visits                 | 3.55<br>(2.61)       | 3.78<br>(2.28)       | 2.72<br>(2.12)                     |
| <b>Written<sup>c</sup></b>   |                      |                      |                                    |
| Letters                      | 4.45<br>(2.20)       | 4.59<br>(2.45)       | 3.08<br>(2.25)                     |
| Email                        | .37<br>(1.36)        | .74<br>(2.03)        | .18<br>(1.00)                      |
| ‘Storybook Dads’             | n/a                  | n/a                  | .54<br>(.50)                       |
| Total written                | 4.70<br>(2.48)       | 5.13<br>(3.43)       | 3.29<br>(2.49)                     |
| Telephone calls <sup>c</sup> | 6.26<br>(1.96)       | 5.97<br>(1.84)       | 5.50<br>(2.03)                     |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>Children’s amount of contact with father reported from the mothers’ perspective.

<sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Never* to 6 = *More than once a week*. <sup>c</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Never* to 8 = *More than once a day*.

Telephone calls were the most frequent method of contact for all family members, and they spoke, on average, approximately *"twice weekly."* This was followed by written contact: On average, the fathers and mothers exchanged letters approximately *"weekly,"* while for the children, this was *"monthly."* The qualitative comments indicated that, for some parents, letters were a particularly useful mode of communication, as it allowed them to *"say what you want to say"* and *"open up your heart."* However, this was offset by their comments regarding concerns with postal delays and privacy. Email and taped stories were not widely used by the families, which may be partly due to the fact that these services were not available in some prisons.

Ordinary visits were, on average, the most frequently used type of visit for all family members, compared to family and children's visits. Here, fathers and mothers had ordinary visits approximately *"monthly,"* while the children visited *"less often than monthly."* The findings on visits should be interpreted with caution, however, as the availability and frequency of different types of visits in the prisons varied widely as per the visitation policies and regimes. Furthermore, the low frequency of visits in general may also be indicative of barriers that *prevented* some families from visiting the fathers in prison. Such barriers include the distance and cost of travelling, and the difficulties involved in mothers travelling with young children, which were reported by the mothers.

Despite this, we asked the fathers and mothers an open-ended question on what they liked and disliked about the different types of visits. Fifteen per cent ( $n = 12$ ) of all fathers and mothers commented negatively about the restrictions on physical contact during ordinary visits. In fact, 16.3% ( $n = 13$ ) of parents commented on the importance of physical contact: *"I dislike having to sit in the same chair, and no conjugal visits. It's good to have physical contact and see people you love." "I wish I had more [visits] and that they were more personal. We have to sit far apart."* The implication here is that policies which help to facilitate this reportedly important component of visits could help to improve the quality of the interactions between imprisoned fathers and their families.

In addition to frequency of contact, fathers and mothers were asked whether the contact that they had during the imprisonment was a positive experience (scale range was 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Extremely*). Both fathers and mothers rated their contact, on average, as *"very positive"* ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = .65$  and  $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ , respectively). Fathers and mothers were also asked whether they thought the amount of contact that they had was enough (scale range was 1 = *Should be much less* to 5 = *Should be much*

more). The mean rating for fathers was 4.14 ( $SD = .87$ ), and for mothers was 3.85 ( $SD = .98$ ), which indicated that both groups thought the contact that they had “*should be more.*”

Table 14 shows fathers’ and mothers’ approaches to solving family problems Time 1 and Time 2. This comprised two subscales: incendiary communication (e.g., “*We yelled and screamed at each other*”) and affirming communication (e.g., “*We talked things through till we reached a solution*”). Mothers reported significantly more positive approaches at Time 2 than Time 1,  $t(35) = -2.22, p < .05$ . At Time 2, the mean scores for both parents were similar, which indicates that both parents were open to positive approaches to solving family problems.

In terms of communication, fathers and mothers were asked to rate the extent to which they kept things from each other and, on average, their reports did not differ significantly (see Table 14). Fathers and mothers were also asked at Time 1 to rate how much they had talked to each other about the resettlement issues of money, living arrangements, employment, alcohol use, drug use, maintaining family relationships, and involvement in criminal activity (scales ranged from 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *A lot*). These seven items were aggregated to provide an overall “*communication*” score. The mean score for fathers was 2.98 ( $SD = .86$ ), and for mothers, it was slightly higher at 3.13 ( $SD = .95$ ). However, this difference was not statistically significant.

**Table 14.** Ratings of parents’ family communication at Time 1 and Time 2

|  | Fathers         |                 | Mothers         |                 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|  | M<br>(SD)       | M<br>(SD)       | M<br>(SD)       | M<br>(SD)       |
| Approach to solving family problems <sup>a</sup> | 19.03<br>(7.56) | 21.06<br>(6.97) | 16.82<br>(6.82) | 20.87<br>(6.49) |
| Kept things from partner <sup>b</sup>            | 2.51<br>(1.52)  | 2.16<br>(1.24)  | 2.21<br>(1.32)  | 2.00<br>(1.38)  |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>Total score range was 0 – 30. <sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*.

### *Participation in Prison Programmes*

Fifty three per cent of fathers had completed (or were currently taking) an offending behaviour programme or drug and/or alcohol course at Time 1. Forty five per cent of the fathers had completed a parenting or fatherhood course in prison. Seventy two per cent of fathers who had completed parenting programmes stated that participation in these courses influenced their role as a father. Sixty eight per cent of fathers had taken (or were taking) an educational or training course in prison. Fathers cited a

range of perceived benefits from the courses they had undertaken: *“Opened my eyes to more things. I think it has changed the way I think as a dad;”* *“Made me reflect on my family. Understand more about the meaning of family;”* *“Good to get certificates, feels like it helps to get a job;”* *“Drugs (programme) helps you avoid relapse.”*

### *Formal and Informal Support*

Fifty five per cent of imprisoned fathers and 29.0% of mothers were receiving formal support from agencies or organisations at Time 1. Organisations supporting mothers included probation and social services, NACRO, Prisoners’ Families Helpline, Family Links services and a Family Intervention Project. These services offered counselling, advice and facilitated children’s visits to prison. Fathers’ and mothers’ reports did not differ significantly from Time 1 to Time 2. Fathers’ and mothers’ reports of support received from family and friends are shown in Table 15. The respective figures are sum scores of various indicators of informal support. On average, the scores indicated that the families felt they had social and material support from their informal network. At Time 1, mothers mentioned significantly more support from friends than fathers did,  $t(77) = 1.96, p < .10$ . No other differences were statistically significant.

*Table 15. Fathers’ and mothers’ ratings of support from family and friends*

|   | Fathers          |                 | Mothers          |                  |
|---|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | M<br>(SD)        | M<br>(SD)       | M<br>(SD)        | M<br>(SD)        |
|   | Time 1           | Time 2          | Time 1           | Time 2           |
| Support from family <sup>a</sup>                                | 22.45<br>(6.27)  | 22.74<br>(5.29) | 20.79<br>(6.46)  | 21.80<br>(5.73)  |
| Support from friends <sup>a</sup>                               | 18.73<br>(6.23)  | 18.82<br>(6.20) | 21.41<br>(5.92)  | 20.83<br>(6.64)  |
| Support from family and friends<br>(total support) <sup>b</sup> | 41.18<br>(10.69) | 41.56<br>(9.29) | 42.21<br>(10.20) | 42.63<br>(10.73) |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>Total score range was 1 – 28. <sup>b</sup>Total score range was 1 – 56.

Fathers’ qualitative comments indicated that their family and friends supported them in various ways: *“Talking about present situation, encouragement not to give up, financial from family and friends;”* *“They will help with lifts for jobs;”* *“Talking, laughing, joking.”* Mothers’ comments also revealed positive experiences: *“If you need anything, they help - money, babysitting;”* *“When dad was in prison, had the boys to give me a break. Have me to stay - for a change of scenery. Had boys when I had driving lessons*

etc. Financially too. A bit of everything;” “If I was ever short of anything, if I needed company, mum would get in a taxi and come stay for a couple of weeks.”

*Perceived Stigma*

Fathers and mothers reported similar levels of perceived stigma at Time 1 ( $M = 19.85, SD = 3.50$  and  $M = 18.68, SD = 3.62$ , respectively) and Time 2 ( $M = 19.91, SD = 3.48$  and  $M = 18.20, SD = 3.86$ , respectively), although mothers reported significantly less stigma than fathers at Time 2,  $t(72) = -1.99, p < .10$ . The total score range was from 1 to 28, with high scores indicating higher levels of perceived stigma.

*Post-Release Adjustment*

At Time 2, fathers’ and mothers’ ratings indicated that, on average, they thought they had adjusted “somewhat well” since the father’s release. Parents’ ratings of their own adjustment were not significantly different. Fathers’ ratings of how well they had adjusted post-release were significantly higher than mothers’ ratings of his adjustment (see Table 16),  $t(76) = 2.10, p < .05$ . Mothers’ ratings of their own adjustment were lower than fathers’ ratings of her adjustment, but again, this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 16. Fathers’ and mothers’ ratings of adjustment at Time 2

|                     | Fathers<br>M<br>(SD) | Mothers<br>M<br>(SD) |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Fathers’ adjustment | 3.86<br>(.98)        | 3.33<br>(1.22)       |
| Mothers’ adjustment | 3.85<br>(.90)        | 3.64<br>(1.03)       |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. Scale range was 1 = Not at all well, 5 = Extremely well.

Fathers’ and mothers’ ratings of the fathers’ difficulties with various issues in resettlement are shown in Table 17. Mothers’ reports of fathers’ difficulties were higher than the fathers’ self-reports.

Table 17. Fathers' and mothers' ratings of fathers' difficulties with resettlement outcomes at Time 2

|  | Fathers        | Mothers        |
|--|----------------|----------------|
|  | M<br>(SD)      | M<br>(SD)      |
| Difficulties with resettlement outcomes <sup>a</sup> (total score) | 2.00<br>(.61)  | 2.40<br>(.84)  |
| Difficulty with criminal activity                                  | 1.66<br>(1.17) | 2.03<br>(1.40) |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. Note. <sup>a</sup>Resettlement outcomes comprised: money, accommodation, employment, alcohol use, drug use and maintaining family relationships. Scale range was 1 = *Not at all difficult*, 5 = *Extremely difficult*.

The qualitative data on life after prison showed both positive and critical views. For example, fathers said: *“Positive - being together again, spending time;” “Positive - all have tried to help me, to stop me getting into trouble again;” “Generally positive. Main challenge is me adjusting and coming to terms with what happened to me, adjusting to the experience;” “Now difficult because I don't have a job, not having any money.”* In describing life after release, some mothers said: *“Good, but features of his old lifestyle (drugs, alcohol). Hopefully should be fine. I gave him an ultimatum;” “Just want us to be a family together. Was pregnant, had an abortion, we can't afford another baby now. Generally feel positive though and hopeful;” “No support from his family; no one accepts that he's willing to change. He feels he should give up;” “My mum stopped talking to me. She doesn't like me being with him. He left me for two weeks after prison because he said he needed time to think, but he came back. It broke my heart;” “At the beginning, very stressful because of area and adapting to being back out, but now very positive.”*

### Resilience

Fathers' and mothers' resilience was measured at Time 2. This measure contained items which addressed aspects of active coping, stress resistance and social resources (Bender & Lösel, 2009). The total score range was from 1 to 52, with high scores representing higher levels of resilience. The fathers' mean scores were similar to the partners' mean scores ( $M = 41.14$ ,  $SD = 6.60$  and  $M = 41.67$ ,  $SD = 5.42$ , respectively), indicating reasonably high levels of resilience in both groups.

### 3.2 Fathers' and Mothers' Post-Release Expectations and Experiences

Table 18 presents the mean ratings of fathers' and mothers' *expected* (Time 1) and *experienced* (Time 2) difficulties for fathers post-release with regards to: money, finding accommodation, finding a job, alcohol use, drug use, maintaining relationships, and avoiding criminal activity. In addition, fathers' and mothers' mean ratings of their expectations and experiences of the quality of their relationship, as well as the fathers' involvement with the children are presented. Between-subjects *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether fathers' and mothers' ratings at Time 1 and Time 2 differed significantly from each other.

*Table 18.* Fathers' and mothers' Time 1 expectations and Time 2 experiences

|   | Time 1 Expectations |                    |                 | Time 2 Experiences |                    |                 |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|   | Fathers             | Mothers            | <i>t</i> -value | Fathers            | Mothers            | <i>t</i> -value |
|   | M<br>( <i>SD</i> )  | M<br>( <i>SD</i> ) |                 | M<br>( <i>SD</i> ) | M<br>( <i>SD</i> ) |                 |
| Fathers' difficulties <sup>a</sup> with:            |                     |                    |                 |                    |                    |                 |
| Money   | 2.78<br>(1.22)      | 2.92<br>(1.11)     | .55             | 2.97<br>(1.11)     | 2.97<br>(1.18)     | .00             |
| Finding accommodation                               | 2.05<br>(1.39)      | 1.71<br>(1.25)     | -1.13           | 1.95<br>(1.51)     | 1.87<br>(1.28)     | -.23            |
| Finding a job                                       | 2.86<br>(1.42)      | 3.44<br>(1.40)     | 1.76*           | 3.12<br>(1.23)     | 3.54<br>(1.25)     | 1.43            |
| Alcohol use   | 1.34<br>(.68)       | 2.18<br>(1.19)     | 3.55***         | 1.58<br>(1.15)     | 1.92<br>(1.36)     | 1.15            |
| Drug use  | 1.39<br>(.71)       | 2.39<br>(1.42)     | 3.42**          | 1.53<br>(1.14)     | 2.11<br>(1.37)     | 1.87*           |
| Maintaining relationships                           | 1.73<br>(1.03)      | 1.95<br>(1.15)     | .88             | 1.79<br>(1.15)     | 2.18<br>(1.27)     | 1.41            |
| Avoiding criminal activity                          | 1.69<br>(1.00)      | 2.45<br>(1.23)     | 2.98**          | 1.66<br>(1.17)     | 2.03<br>(1.40)     | 1.24            |
| Fathers' involvement with the children <sup>b</sup> | 4.55<br>(.66)       | 4.05<br>(.91)      | -3.64***        | 3.84<br>(1.12)     | 3.50<br>(1.29)     | -1.64*          |
| Quality of relationship <sup>c</sup>                | 4.28<br>(.78)       | 4.21<br>(.99)      | -.06            | 3.67<br>(1.16)     | 3.70<br>(1.44)     | .03             |

M = Mean *SD* = Standard Deviation. \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ . *Note.* <sup>a</sup>Difficulties scales ranged from 1 = *Not at all difficult* to 5 = *Extremely difficult*. <sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*.  $n = 66-69$ . <sup>c</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Much worse than before*, 5 = *Much better than before*.

As illustrated in Figure 4, both parents expected that fathers would have the most difficulty with “finding a job” after his release. Conversely, fathers expected to have the least difficulties with “alcohol use” and

“drug use,” while mothers expected that they would have the least difficulty with “finding accommodation.” Apart from “finding accommodation,” the mothers’ mean ratings of expected difficulties are higher in all other respects. This suggests that mothers are less optimistic than fathers with regards to difficulties during resettlement.

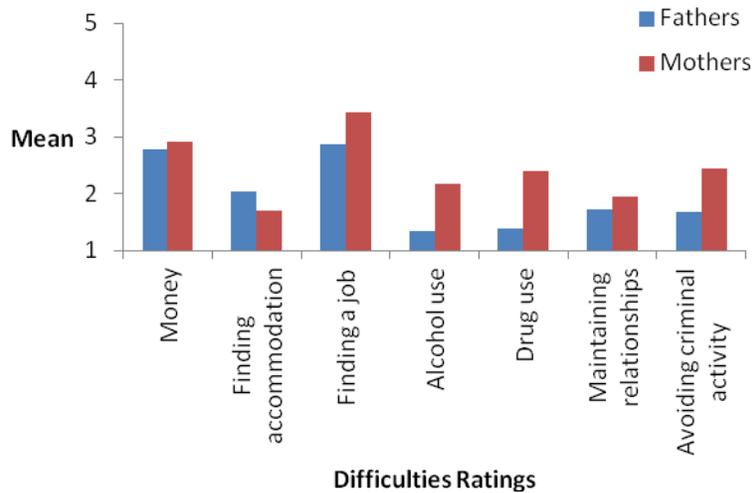


Figure 4. Ratings of fathers’ and mothers’ expected difficulties at Time 1 for fathers post-release

Figure 5 below shows the mean difficulties ratings of both parents for fathers’ experiences at Time 2. Both fathers and mothers reported that fathers had the most difficulty with “finding a job” after his release. Conversely, fathers reported that they had experienced the least difficulties with “alcohol use” and “drug use,” while mothers reported that they had the least difficulty with “finding accommodation.” These findings are consistent with the fathers’ and mothers’ expectations at Time 1.

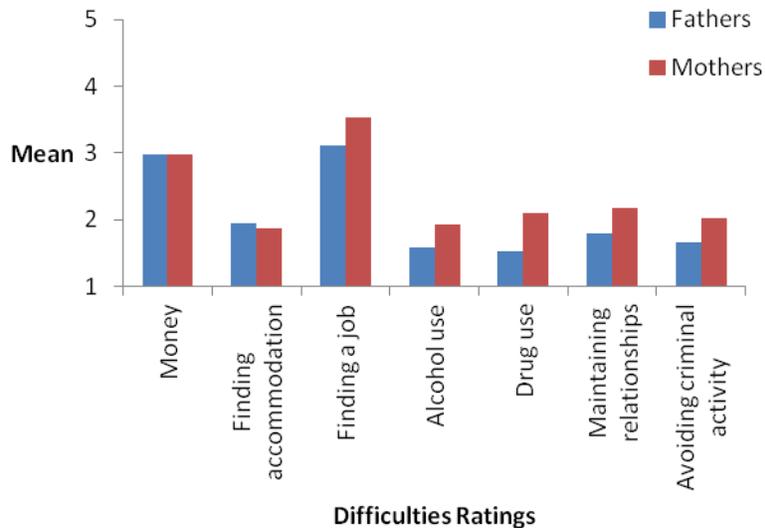


Figure 5. Fathers’ and mothers’ difficulties ratings for fathers’ experiences at Time 2

With regards to the quality of their relationship, at Time 1, fathers’ and mothers’ mean ratings indicated that both groups expected their relationship to be “better than before.” However, their mean ratings at Time 2 indicated that the quality of their relationship had, in fact, decreased. Both parents expected fathers to be “often” involved with the children after his release. Contrary to their Time 1 expectations, however, fathers were only “somewhat” (i.e., less) involved with their children at Time 2.

Results from between-subjects t-tests indicated that at Time 1, mothers expected fathers to have significantly more difficulty with “finding a job,” “alcohol use,” “drug use” and “avoiding criminal activity” than fathers’ self-reported expectations in these respects. In addition, mothers expected fathers to be significantly less involved with the children than fathers expected. At Time 2, only “drug use” and “involvement with the children” differed significantly between fathers and mothers. Here, mothers reported that fathers had experienced significantly more difficulty with “drug use” at Time 2 compared to fathers’ self-reports. Fathers reported that they were significantly more involved with the children at Time 2 compared to the mothers’ reports. The reduction in the number of significant differences between parents’ ratings from Time 1 to Time 2 suggests that the parents’ views became more similar.

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were conducted to compare fathers' and mothers' ratings on each dimension of difficulty across Time 1 and Time 2. There were no significant interactions<sup>32</sup> between parent and time on each difficulty item,  $p > .05$ . However, there was a significant main effect for time with regards to "avoiding criminal activity," Wilks' Lambda = .96,  $F(1, 71) = 3.36$ ,  $p < .10$ , with both fathers and mothers showing a decrease on this rating from Time 1 to Time 2. There was also a significant main effect for parent with regards to difficulties ratings on "finding a job" ( $F(1, 62) = 2.83$ ,  $p < .10$ ), "alcohol use" ( $F(1, 63) = 6.59$ ,  $p < .05$ ), "drug use" ( $F(1, 51) = 10.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and "avoiding criminal activity" ( $F(1, 71) = 4.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggested that parents differ significantly on their perceptions of the fathers' difficulties with these aspects of resettlement.

In conclusion, the findings in Table 18, along with Figures 3 and 4, showed that the mothers had more sceptical expectancies for post-release than fathers. However, the experiences in the first months after release were only partially in accordance with expectations. In particular, fathers' difficulties with alcohol and drugs were lower than expected by mothers, whereas relationship problems were slightly higher.

### **Expected Post-Release Difficulties and Their Impact on Outcomes for Fathers at Time 2**

Table 19 presents the bivariate correlations<sup>33</sup> of fathers' and mothers' expected difficulties for fathers after his release (i.e., money, finding accommodation, finding a job, alcohol use, drug use, maintaining relationships, and criminal activity) with nine key outcomes for fathers at Time 2 (i.e., whether the fathers and mothers were living together, the quality of their relationship, family problem-solving, employment, alcohol units, drug use, stigma, resilience, and overall adjustment). In general, the Time 2 outcomes that were most consistently related to expected difficulties at Time 1 were quality of relationship, family problem-solving, and fathers' drug use.

Rather than describe each finding in detail, selected correlations of interest will be discussed. First, higher expectations of difficulties with drug use at Time 1 were associated with a worse relationship between the mother and father and less positive approaches to family problem-solving. Higher expected difficulties with drugs were also associated with higher levels of drug use by fathers at Time 2. Furthermore, higher expectations of difficulties with criminal activity at Time 1 were also associated

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<sup>32</sup> Interaction effects indicate whether the impact of one variable is influenced by the level of another variable.

<sup>33</sup> Bivariate correlations measure the relationship between two variables.

with a worse relationship between mothers and fathers, less positive approaches to family problem-solving, and more drug use by fathers at Time 2.

Although Table 19 shows some inconsistencies in the relations between fathers' and mothers' expectations and the outcomes, a number of findings are remarkably strong and differentiated (i.e., there were significant differences in the mothers' and fathers' expectations, for example, on alcohol and drug problems). Overall, negative expectations about relationship problems after release seem to negatively affect the parents' relationship and approach to family problem-solving. The number of significant correlations for mothers (i.e., 23) compared to that of fathers (i.e., 16) suggests that mothers' expectations of fathers' difficulties were more realistic<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup>**Interpreting the tables:** The correlation coefficient between each pair of variables is given in the tables, showing the association between them. The correlation coefficient can range from -1 to +1. A negative correlation between two variables indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable decreases. A positive correlation between two variables indicates that as one variable increases, the other variable also increases. The size of the correlation value indicates the strength of the relationship, where a correlation of 0 indicates no relationship, and a correlation of 1 indicates a perfect relationship. With regards to the continuous variables, the scales ranged from low to high scores. Correlations of high significance had a *p* value of less than .01, and correlations of moderate significance had a *p* value of less than .05. To reduce the risk of a Type II error due to our modest sample size, we also recorded correlations that were approaching significance at .10. Finally, the correlations only indicate the relationship between two variables and thus, do not imply causation.

Table 19. Bivariate correlations of fathers' and mothers' Time 1 expectations of difficulties and Time 2 resettlement outcomes for fathers

| Time 2 outcomes                                 |     | Living together | Quality of relationship <sup>b</sup> | Family Problem-Solving | Employment   | Alcohol units | Drug use      | Stigma      | Resilience     | Overall adjustment <sup>c</sup> |
|---|-----|-----------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Time 1 Expected Difficulties<sup>a</sup></b> |     |                 |                                      |                        |              |               |               |             |                |                                 |
| Money   | (F) | -.22            | <b>-.40**</b>                        | <b>-.55***</b>         | .11          | <b>.33**</b>  | <b>.33**</b>  | .18         | -.18           | -.20                            |
|   | (M) | -.22            | <b>-.33**</b>                        | <b>-.53***</b>         | .24          | <b>.42***</b> | <b>.48***</b> | .03         | .01            | <b>-.39**</b>                   |
| Accommodation                                   | (F) | -.26            | <b>-.28*</b>                         | <b>-.49***</b>         | .01          | .25           | <b>.38**</b>  | .02         | -.05           | <b>-.28*</b>                    |
|   | (M) | <b>-.49***</b>  | <b>-.30*</b>                         | <b>-.33*</b>           | .10          | <b>.30*</b>   | .02           | -.02        | -.14           | -.18                            |
| Finding a job                                   | (F) | -.04            | -.14                                 | -.20                   | -.23         | .02           | .19           | <b>.34*</b> | .14            | .09                             |
|   | (M) | -.00            | -.18                                 | -.09                   | -.21         | -.04          | .23           | .30         | -.28           | -.05                            |
| Alcohol use                                     | (F) | <b>-.40**</b>   | <b>-.38**</b>                        | -.29                   | -.02         | <b>.62***</b> | .23           | .19         | -.23           | <b>-.29*</b>                    |
|   | (M) | <b>-.62***</b>  | <b>-.33*</b>                         | -.29                   | -.17         | <b>.45***</b> | .24           | .30         | -.23           | <b>-.30*</b>                    |
| Drug use  | (F) | -.11            | -.09                                 | -.13                   | .07          | -.11          | <b>.38**</b>  | .21         | .12            | .09                             |
|   | (M) | -.08            | <b>-.49***</b>                       | <b>-.62***</b>         | .16          | .25           | <b>.61***</b> | .27         | .09            | -.18                            |
| Maintaining relationships                       | (F) | <b>-.41**</b>   | -.16                                 | -.26                   | -.09         | -.02          | .21           | -.03        | <b>-.44***</b> | -.03                            |
|   | (M) | -.02            | <b>-.41**</b>                        | <b>-.52***</b>         | <b>.36**</b> | .14           | <b>.29*</b>   | -.10        | -.21           | -.29                            |
| Avoiding criminal activity                      | (F) | -.04            | .14                                  | -.11                   | -.01         | -.09          | .23           | .15         | .19            | .11                             |
|   | (M) | -.16            | <b>-.52***</b>                       | <b>-.52***</b>         | .10          | .20           | <b>.45***</b> | .13         | -.11           | -.21                            |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed. Note. <sup>a</sup>Difficulties scales ranged from 1 = *Not at all difficult* to 5 = *Extremely difficult*. <sup>b</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Not at all good*, 5 = *Extremely good*. <sup>c</sup>Scale range was 1 = *Not at all well*, 5 = *Extremely well*.

### **3.3 Risk and Protective Factors as Predictors of Fathers' Resettlement and Families' Adjustment**

At the core of our analysis, we explored whether the families' personal, social and economic factors at Time 1 predicted the success of the fathers' resettlement and families' adjustment at Time 2.

Using the findings from correlation analysis between single Time 1 variables and Time 2 outcomes, factor analysis, and drawing on qualitative data, we formed indices from Time 1 variables which denoted potential predictors of Time 2 outcomes for fathers, mothers and children. With the exception of the predictor for fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system, fathers' and mothers' data were combined and the mean score was used to create predictors that represented characteristics of the family. Mothers were not asked to provide information on the father's involvement with the criminal justice system because it was assumed that the most reliable information could be provided by the fathers. Each predictor can be understood as a continuum of positive to negative values. At the positive end of the continuum, these predictors can be expected to have a protective function, whereas at the negative end, they represent a risk for successful resettlement and adaptation.

We conducted correlation and regression analyses to explore the relationship between individual characteristics and social circumstances of families at Time 1, and adjustment and resettlement outcomes for fathers, mothers and children at Time 2. Correlation analysis describes the strength of the association between two variables. Multiple regression analysis can enhance the information provided by correlation analysis by informing on the overall relation between a set of predictors and an outcome. All Time 1 predictors were entered into the regression analysis together as a model, to examine how well they predicted each of the outcomes. The analysis shows the percentage of the variance in the outcome that is explained by the model. Multiple regression analysis also indicates which individual predictors are significant in predicting the outcome when other predictors are taken into account. For a regression analysis to be valid, the predictors used in the model should not be too highly correlated with each other. Tests for multi-collinearity between the predictors were conducted and this was not shown to be problematic in our analyses. When the outcome variable was not quantitative but dichotomous (yes/no), logistic regression analyses were carried out.

The Time 2 outcome measures that were analysed varied for different family members, reflecting the differential impact of the father's imprisonment.

## **Predictors of Resettlement Outcomes for Fathers, Mothers and Children**

Using the procedure described above, seven Time 1 predictors of families' resettlement and adjustment at Time 2 were developed. These are described below.

### *Quality of the father-mother relationship*

This factor consisted of the fathers' and mothers' assessment of their relationship overall and their sexual relationship on 5-point scales, where 1 = *Not at all good*, and 5 = *Extremely good*.

### *Contact and communication between the family during the fathers' imprisonment*

Two predictors were developed: the *frequency* of face-to-face, verbal and written communication between the father, mother and children and the *quality of communication* between the family during imprisonment. These factors consisted of data from interview items where parents rated on a 5-point scale how much they shared information with each other (1 = *Never* and 5 = *Always*) and how much they talked about the father's difficulties with money, accommodation, employment, alcohol use, drug use, maintaining relationships and avoiding criminal activity (1 = *Not at all difficult*, and 5 = *Extremely difficult*).

### *Fathers' involvement with the children before prison*

This consisted of the fathers' and mothers' reports of the fathers' involvement with the children in the following areas: daily care, discipline, play and leisure activities, and where applicable, school work. Parents rated their responses on a 5-point scale, where 1 = *Never*, and 5 = *Always*.

### *Parents' support from family and friends*

This predictor consisted of the fathers' and mothers' scores from the standardised measure, *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)*, and qualitative data on the extent to which family and friends helped fathers and mothers to cope during his imprisonment. For the standardised measures, parents rated on 7-point scales (1 = *Very strongly disagree* and 7 = *Very strongly agree*), their responses to statements such as, "*My family really tries to help me*" and "*I can count on my friends when things go wrong.*"

### *Parents' material resources*

This predictor consisted of the fathers' and mothers' socio-economic circumstances (i.e., accommodation arrangements, employment status, weekly income) prior to the fathers' imprisonment and the father's ratings of his perceived difficulty in securing accommodation, employment and income after his release (5-point scales, where 1= *Not at all difficult*, and 5 = *Extremely difficult*).

### *Fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system*

This predictor was constructed using the fathers' reports of his number of previous convictions, previous prison sentences, the length of time spent in prison during his life, and the length of his current sentence.

## **3.3.1 Fathers' Resettlement Outcomes**

We asked fathers about four aspects of their lives after release from prison in order to examine the relationship of the Time 1 predictors to fathers' resettlement outcomes. These aspects were: their relationships with the mothers and children, well-being and substance use, material and economic circumstances (i.e., living arrangements, work and finances) and their difficulty with avoiding criminal activity. Key findings on the relationship of Time 1 predictors with Time 2 outcomes for fathers are presented in Tables 20, 21 and 22.

The tables contain not only the correlations between the two respective variables, but also the results of multiple regression analyses. We present the amount of variance that an outcome variable explains by all the predictors together (e.g.,  $R^2 = .50$  indicates that 50 per cent of the difference in outcome can be attributed to all predictors that have been included in the model).

### **Fathers' Relationship with Mother and Children**

We evaluated fathers' relationships with the mother and children after they were released from prison using five variables from fathers' interviews at Time 2: if they were living with the family, the quality of their relationships with the mother and the children, the difficulties they perceived in maintaining these relationships, and their reports of their approach to solving family problems. All of the Time 1 predictors showed significant relationships with the fathers' relationships with the mothers and children at Time 2.

For example, the quality of the parents' relationship at Time 1 was the strongest predictor of their relationship at Time 2. Table 20 shows the results of the correlation and regression analysis.

*Table 20.* Risk and protective factors associated with fathers' relationships with mothers and children at Time 2

| <b>Time 2 outcomes</b>                                | Living together | Relationship with mother | Relationship with children | Relationship difficulties with mother and children | Approach to solving family problems |
|---|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                 |                          |                            |  |                                     |
| Quality of parents' relationship                      | .45**           | .65***                   | .53***                     | -.71***  | .66***                              |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       | .51***          | .60***                   | .59***                     | -.48***  | .51***                              |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment | .15             | .52***                   | .28*                       | -.37**   | .32*                                |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      | .24             | .50***                   | .32**                      | -.49***  | .55***                              |
| Parents' support from family and friends              | .28             | .47***                   | .30*                       | -.37**   | .61***                              |
| Parents' material circumstances                       | .34*            | .44***                   | .32**                      | -.27*  | .30*                                |
| Father's involvement with criminal justice system     | -.03            | -.26                     | -.30*                      | .25  | -.30*                               |
| <b>Total variance explained (<math>R^2</math>)</b>    | <b>.66***</b>   | <b>.72***</b>            | <b>.50***</b>              | <b>.60***</b>                                      | <b>.61***</b>                       |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 31 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

#### *Living together*

The quality of the parents' relationship, frequency of contact during imprisonment, and the parents' material circumstances were positively associated with living together at Time 2. The logistic regression model containing all predictors was significant and correctly classified whether fathers and mothers were living together in 66 per cent of cases.

### *Relationship with mother*

All predictors except the fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system were significantly associated with a positive relationship with the mother at Time 2. The strongest predictors were the quality of the relationship, frequency of contact during imprisonment, quality of communication during imprisonment, and the fathers' involvement with the children before imprisonment. However, support from family and friends and parents' material circumstances were also important. The multiple regression model containing all predictors was significant and explained 72 per cent of the variance in fathers' relationship with mothers.

### *Relationship with children*

All predictors were significantly associated with fathers' relationship with their children at Time 2. Similar to the fathers' relationships with the mothers, the strongest associations were the quality of the parents' relationship and the frequency of contact during the imprisonment. This was also found in the regression analysis. The regression model was significant and explained 50 per cent of the variance in fathers' relationship with their children.

### *Relationship difficulties with mother and children*

All predictors except the fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system were significantly associated with a positive relationship with the mother at Time 2. The strongest association was with quality of the parents' relationship. The regression model was significant and explained 60 per cent of the variance in the outcomes. As expected, the pattern of correlations was a mirror image of those for the two positive outcome variables above.

### *Approach to family problem solving*

All predictors were significantly associated with active and constructive approaches to solving family problems. The strongest associations were with quality of relationship and support from family and friends. The multiple regression was significant and explained 61 per cent of the variance in the outcome. Again, quality of relationship and support from family and friends played a core role in the regression model.

Overall, the quality of the parents' relationship and frequency of contact during imprisonment were most often significantly correlated with the outcomes measuring father's relationship with the mother

and children at Time 2. Although these and other predictors were inter-correlated, the regression models were highly significant and explained substantial proportions of outcome variance.

### Fathers' Well-Being and Substance Use after Release

Seven Time 2 variables were used to explore the fathers' physical and psychological well-being after his release from prison. This included scores from standardized measures on general health problems, stigma, resilience, and ratings of the fathers' difficulties with and use of alcohol and drugs. Table 21 shows the results of the correlation and regression analyses.

Table 21. Risk and protective factors associated with fathers' well-being and substance use at Time 2

| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | General health problems | Stigma | Resilience | Alcohol use | Difficulty with alcohol | Drugs use (N/Y) | Difficulty with drugs |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|--------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Quality of parents' relationship                      |                        | -.07                    | .12    | .44***     | -.50***     | -.50***                 | -.25            | -.51***               |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                        | -.13                    | -.12   | .72***     | -.54***     | -.42***                 | -.12            | -.21                  |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment |                        | -.16                    | -.21   | .62***     | -.43**      | -.39**                  | -.09            | -.40**                |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      |                        | .04                     | -.06   | .44***     | -.17        | -.03                    | -.11            | -.30                  |
| Parents' support from family and friends              |                        | .19                     | .07    | .25        | -.29*       | -.07                    | -.32**          | -.42**                |
| Parents' material circumstances                       |                        | -.20                    | -.27   | .07        | -.29*       | -.16                    | -.45***         | -.28                  |
| Father's involvement with criminal justice system     |                        | .15                     | .16    | -.26       | .39**       | .23                     | .35**           | .45**                 |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                        | .21                     | .20    | .57***     | .47***      | .53***                  | .38**           | .54**                 |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 29 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

### *General health problems*

The predictors were not significantly correlated with general health problems at Time 2, and accordingly, the regression model was also not significant.

### *Stigma*

As with general health, the predictors were not significantly correlated with the experienced stigmatisation at Time 2. Accordingly, the regression model was also not significant.

### *Resilience*

The quality of the parents' relationship, quality and frequency of contact during imprisonment, and fathers' involvement with the children before prison were associated with fathers' higher resilience scores. The regression model was significant and explained 57 per cent of the variance in resilience.

### *Alcohol use*

Higher alcohol consumption and more difficulty with alcohol at Time 2 were associated with a number of Time 1 variables: lower quality of the parents' relationship, lower frequency of contact and quality of family communication during imprisonment, less support from family and friends and lower material resources. Fathers' difficulties with alcohol were also significantly predicted by greater involvement with the criminal justice system at Time 1. The regression model was significant and explained 47 per cent of the variance in fathers' alcohol use at Time 2. The regression model for difficulty with alcohol use was also significant and explained 53 per cent of the variance in the outcome. In both models, the quality of the parents' relationship and frequency of contact during the imprisonment had an independent impact.

### *Drug use*

Greater difficulties with drugs and use of illegal drugs were associated with less positive relationships between the father and the mother, lower quality of communication between the parents', less support from family and friends, lower material resources, and father's greater involvement with the criminal justice system at Time 1. In addition, lower quality of communication between the father and his family during imprisonment predicted more difficulties with drugs. The multiple regression model for drug use was significant, predicting drug use correctly in 38 per cent of cases. The model for difficulty with drug use was also significant, explaining 54 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

Overall, Time 1 relationship factors were important to fathers' well-being and substance use outcomes at Time 2. The quality of the parents' relationship and quality of the parents' communication during the imprisonment were most relevant. The frequency of family contact during the imprisonment also made a significant individual contribution to predicting the outcomes, followed by the quality of the parents' relationship.

### **Fathers' Material and Economic Circumstances after Release**

We evaluated the success of the fathers' resettlement in terms of their material and economic outcomes by looking at their Time 2 data on employment, income and the difficulties they had experienced with work, accommodation and money since leaving prison. Table 22 contains the results of the correlation and regression analyses.

#### *Employment*

Lower quality of communication and higher material resources predicted fathers' employment at Time 2. Similarly, higher material resources at Time 1 was associated with fewer difficulties in finding a job after prison. The regression models for employment and difficulties in finding employment were not significant, however. This indicates that the overall prediction by Time 1 variables was weaker than for other outcome variables.

#### *Income*

Higher material resources at Time 1 were associated with a higher weekly income and (consistently) also with experiencing less financial difficulties for fathers at Time 2. Involvement with the criminal justice system also predicted financial problems. Only the regression model for difficulty with money was significant, and explained 44 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

#### *Accommodation*

Fathers who experienced fewer difficulties with finding accommodation had more positive predictors at Time 1, i.e., more positive relationships with mothers, higher frequency of contact and quality of communication with mothers and children, more involvement with children before prison, more support from family and friends during their imprisonment, higher material resources, and less involvement with the criminal justice system. The regression model was significant, and explained 78 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

Table 22. Risk and protective factors associated with fathers' material and economic outcomes at Time 2

| <b>Time 2 outcomes</b>                                | Employment (N/Y) | Difficulty with finding employment | Fathers' income <sup>a</sup> | Difficulty with money | Difficulty with finding accommodation |
|---|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                  |                                    |                              |                       |                                       |
| Quality of parents' relationship                      | -.24             | .08                                | .06                          | -.16                  | -.79**                                |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       | -.22             | .01                                | .04                          | -.06                  | -.68***                               |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment | -.30*            | .05                                | .06                          | -.13                  | -.59***                               |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      | -.06             | -.06                               | .00                          | -.21                  | -.49***                               |
| Parents' support from family and friends              | .07              | -.28                               | .46***                       | -.20                  | -.47***                               |
| Parents' material circumstances                       | .28*             | .48***                             | .32*                         | -.57***               | -.36**                                |
| Father's involvement with criminal justice system     | .03              | .14                                | -.22                         | .34**                 | .38**                                 |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       | .29              | .35                                | .31                          | .44**                 | .78***                                |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 33 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

Overall, the fathers' material and economic situations after release were less related to family relationship factors at Time 1 than the psychosocial outcomes presented in Table 21. In contrast, the parents' material circumstances at Time 1 were relatively strong and consistent predictors of these outcomes. However, with regard to accommodation, the relationship factors played an important role as well. This was plausible, insofar as a father with good family relationships can settle into the family home.

## Fathers' Reoffending

Seven fathers in our sample had reoffended at Time 2. Because of low variability with this small number, this analysis should be interpreted cautiously. We also analysed the fathers' reported difficulties in avoiding criminal activity as an outcome (see Table 23). Actual reoffending correlated significantly with a worse relationship with the mother, a lower quality of communication with the family, and less support from family and friends at Time 1. The greater the father's criminal history at Time 1, the more difficulties he had with avoiding criminal activity at Time 2. In contrast, a more positive relationship with the mother, higher quality of communication with the family during the prison sentence, and higher material resources at Time 1 predicted fewer difficulties with crime at Time 2. The regression model for fathers who returned to prison at Time 2 was significant, and explained 79 per cent of the variance in this outcome. The model for difficulties avoiding criminal activity significantly explained 44 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

Table 23. Risk and protective factors associated with fathers' criminal activity at Time 2

|   | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b>              |   |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
|   | Father returned to prison at Time 2 | Difficulties avoiding criminal activity |
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                                     |   |
| Quality of parents' relationship                      | -.57***                             | -.42***                                 |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       | -.24                                | -.21                                    |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment | -.48***                             | -.39**                                  |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      | -.22                                | -.19                                    |
| Parents' support from family and friends              | -.11**                              | -.22                                    |
| Parents' material circumstances                       | -.01                                | -.39**                                  |
| Father's involvement with criminal justice system     | .14                                 | .46***                                  |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       | <b>.79***</b>                       | <b>.44**</b>                            |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 37 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

As for the other outcomes presented above, family factors appear to be most consistently related to reoffending at Time 2 for fathers. In particular, communication during imprisonment, a good quality of the parents' relationship before imprisonment and good parental relationship seem to protect against reoffending.

Whereas these factors showed substantial correlations with fathers' positive or negative resettlement outcomes, fathers' alcohol consumption and illegal drug use prior to imprisonment were not consistently significantly associated with outcomes and are, therefore, not reported here in detail. This may have to do with participation in programmes, which will be discussed below.

### **Fathers' Participation in Prison Programmes, Formal Support and His Resettlement Outcomes**

Fathers' participation in offending behaviour programmes or parenting programmes during his custodial sentence and the formal support he received from agencies and organisations were not consistently significantly associated with resettlement outcomes. However, these findings should not be misinterpreted as a failure of such interventions, as fathers who received official support or who were taking part in programmes were likely more in need than others. For example, fathers receiving support from agencies and organisations had lower material resources at Time 1,  $t(38) = 2.18$   $p < .05$ . In addition, taking an alcohol programme in prison was significantly associated with younger age at first conviction, longer prison sentences, higher alcohol use, a less positive approach to solving family problems and less support from friends and family at Time 1 (all  $p$ 's  $< .10$ ). As expected, taking a drug programme was associated with drug use at Time 1 ( $p < .01$ ).

When taking such differences into account, programmes seemed to play a significant role for families in resettlement. For example, when the quality of the parents' relationship at Time 1 was controlled (i.e., statistically removed from the analysis), fathers' participation in family orientated programmes significantly predicted positive family relationships at Time 2 ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .10$ ). When alcohol and drug use at Time 1 were controlled, fathers' participation in drug and/or alcohol programmes significantly predicted lower drug use after release ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < .10$ ). These more differentiated findings suggest that family programmes and alcohol/drug treatment contributed to positive outcomes by addressing needs that existed before imprisonment.

### **3.3.2 Mothers' Adjustment**

Items regarding the mothers' adjustment after the father's release from prison focussed on three areas: family relationships (i.e., with the father and their children), physical and psychological well-being, and material welfare (i.e., finances and living arrangements). We also asked the mothers how well they felt they had adjusted, overall, to the father's release.

Some variables, such as 'use of illegal drugs' by mothers, were not included as an outcome because these instances were rare. Formal support from organisations and agencies were not significantly associated with mothers' outcomes at Time 2. The analyses of these factors are, therefore, not presented here.

#### **Mothers' Family Relationships**

Time 2 outcomes to evaluate mothers' family relationships at Time 2 were whether she was living with the father, her relationship with the father and children, and her approach to family problem solving. Table 24 shows the results of the correlation and regression analyses.

##### *Living together*

Quality of parents' relationship, frequency of contact and quality of communication during imprisonment, and support from family and friends were significantly associated with whether the mother and father were living together at Time 2. The regression model containing these predictors was significant and correctly predicted in 49 per cent of cases.

##### *Relationship with father*

The quality of the parents' relationship at Time 1 was most strongly associated with their relationship at Time 2. Frequency of contact, quality of communication, fathers' involvement with the children before prison and parents' support from family and friends were also associated with better relationships with fathers at Time 2. The regression model was significant and explained 64 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

Table 24. Risk and protective factors associated with mothers' family relationships at Time 2

| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | Living together | Relationship with father | Relationship with children | Approach to family problem solving |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Quality of parents' relationship                      |                        | .47***          | .73***                   | .26                        | .40**                              |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                        | .43***          | .61***                   | .22                        | .29*                               |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment |                        | .33**           | .58***                   | .22                        | .35**                              |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      |                        | .23             | .57***                   | .28*                       | .56***                             |
| Parents' support from family and friends              |                        | .34**           | .32**                    | .41**                      | .41***                             |
| Parents' material circumstances                       |                        | .30*            | .15                      | .51***                     | .17                                |
| Father's involvement with the criminal justice system |                        | -.10            | -.14                     | -.26                       | -.32**                             |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                        | .49***          | .64***                   | .43**                      | .42**                              |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 35 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

#### *Relationship with children*

Higher involvement of fathers with their children before prison, more support from family and friends and higher material resources predicted better relationships with children after release. The regression model was significant and explained 43 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

#### *Approach to solving family problems*

More positive approaches by mothers to solving family problems were associated with higher quality of parents' relationship, higher frequency of contact and quality of communication with fathers while he was in prison, greater involvement of the father with his children before prison, more support from friends and family during the fathers' imprisonment, and less involvement of the father in the criminal justice system. The regression model was significant and explained 42 per cent of the variance in this outcome.

For mothers, the most consistent predictor associated with her relationship with the father and children at Time 2 was the parents' support from family and friends. Overall, the results of the correlation analyses were mostly consistent with the findings on the fathers' experiences after prison. For example, family factors such as the quality of the parents' relationship and contact and communication are highly important for post-release relationships.

### Mothers' Well-Being

Four variables were used to indicate mothers' physical and psychological well-being at Time 2: their scores from standardized measures on general health problems, stigma, resilience, and their level of alcohol consumption. Table 25 shows the results of the correlation and regression analyses.

Table 25. Risk and protective factors associated with mothers' well-being at Time 2

|   | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | General health <sup>a</sup> | Alcohol | Stigma | Resilience |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|--------|------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                        |                             |         |        |            |
| Quality of parents' relationship                      |                        | -.42***                     | -.40**  | -.18   | .23        |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                        | -.26*                       | -.45*** | -.15   | -.12       |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment |                        | -.27*                       | -.55*** | -.29*  | .01        |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      |                        | -.19                        | -.48*** | -.12   | .19        |
| Parents' support from family and friends              |                        | -.35**                      | -.01    | .14    | -.12       |
| Parents' material circumstances                       |                        | -.07                        | .19     | .11    | .01        |
| Fathers' involvement in the criminal justice system   |                        | .28*                        | -.02    | -.08   | -.10       |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                        | .26                         | .45***  | .16    | .20        |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 35 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

### *General health problems*

Fewer general health problems for mothers at Time 2 were associated with more positive relationships with the father before prison, higher frequency of contact during his imprisonment, and better quality of communication with the father. More support from family and friends and less involvement of the father in the criminal justice system were also significant predictors. However, the regression model was not significant. This may have been due to inter-correlations amongst the predictors.

### *Alcohol use*

Higher alcohol consumption by the mothers after the father's release was significantly associated with lower quality of parents' relationship, less frequent contact during imprisonment, lower quality of communication, and less involvement of the fathers with the children before prison. The regression model was significant and explained 45 per cent of the variance in mothers' alcohol use.

### *Stigma*

Higher quality of communication between the mother and father during imprisonment was associated with lower stigma scores for the father at Time 2. However, the regression model was not statistically significant.

### *Resilience*

In contrast to the findings on fathers (see above), none of the Time 1 factors were significantly associated with mothers' resilience at Time 2. Accordingly, the regression model was not statistically significant.

As with the fathers, family related factors (i.e., quality of parents' relationship, frequency of contact during imprisonment, and quality of communication) appeared to be the most consistent predictors of mothers' well-being outcomes at Time 2.

## **Mothers' Material Welfare**

Two variables were analysed to explore mothers' material welfare at Time 2: income and stability of her living arrangements (see Table 26).

Table 26. Risk and protective factors associated with mothers' material welfare at Time 2

| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | Mothers' income <sup>a</sup> | Stable accommodation (same as Time 1) |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Quality of parents' relationship                      |                        | .27*                         | .11                                   |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                        | .17                          | .18                                   |
| Quality of parents' communication during imprisonment |                        | -.17                         | .09                                   |
| Father's involvement with children before prison      |                        | .10                          | .10                                   |
| Parents' support from family and friends              |                        | .40**                        | .13                                   |
| Parents' material circumstances                       |                        | -.02                         | .01                                   |
| Father's involvement with the criminal justice system |                        | -.19                         | -.09                                  |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                        | .23                          | .06                                   |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ ; two-tailed.  $n = 35 - 40$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items. Note. <sup>a</sup>Extreme outliers were excluded.

### *Income*

Higher income at Time 2 was associated with higher quality of relationship and more support from family and friends. The regression model was not statistically significant.

### *Stable accommodation*

None of the Time 1 variables were significantly associated with the stability of mothers' living arrangements at Time 2. The regression model was not statistically significant.

Overall, only two predictors (i.e., quality of parents' relationship and parents' support from family and friends) showed significant relationships with mothers' material welfare outcomes at Time 2.

### **Mothers' Overall Adjustment**

We asked mothers how well they felt they had adjusted overall to the fathers' release from prison. The quality of the parents' relationship ( $r = .33, p < .05$ ), and the fathers' level of involvement with the

children before prison ( $r = .35, p < .05$ ) predicted mothers' ratings of their overall adjustment at Time 2. The other Time 1 predictors were not significantly associated with mothers' self-rated overall adjustment. The regression model containing all predictors was not statistically significant.

### **3.3.3 Children's Adjustment**

#### **Parents' Reports on Child Adjustment**

One of the measures of children's outcomes at Time 2 was taken from parents' ratings on how well their children had adjusted since their father's release from prison (scale ranged from 1 = *Not at all well* to 5 = *Extremely well*).

Table 27 shows the relationship between Time 1 variables reported by fathers and mothers, and their views on the children's adjustment. The patterns of correlations indicated that *children's positive adjustment* at Time 2 (i.e., those children who had adjusted "well" or "extremely well" according to parents' reports) was associated with higher quality of relationship between the mother and father, more involvement from the father before prison and higher levels of the parents' material resources. Higher frequency of contact and quality of communication with the father during his imprisonment, and higher levels of support from family and friends also predicted the children's positive adjustment after the fathers' release. The regression model was significant and the Time 1 predictors explained 70 per cent of the variance.

Table 27. Risk and protective factors associated with children’s adjustment at Time 2

|   | Time 2 outcomes | Children’s adjustment |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                 |                       |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                 | .63***                |
| Quality of parents’ communication during imprisonment |                 | .46***                |
| Quality of parents’ relationship                      |                 | .65***                |
| Father’s involvement with children before prison      |                 | .48***                |
| Parents’ material circumstances                       |                 | .43***                |
| Parents’ support from family and friends              |                 | .51***                |
| Father’s involvement with the criminal justice system |                 | -.13                  |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                 | <b>.70***</b>         |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 61 - 69$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

Children’s adjustment at Time 2 was also measured by the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)*. Parents were asked to complete the questionnaire for each of their children over the age of 4. SDQ scores were available for 61.0% of the 69 children at Time 2. The results are shown in Table 28 below.

Higher quality of parents’ relationship at Time 1 was associated with fewer conduct problems for children and higher levels of pro-social behaviour after the fathers’ release. Less material resources for parents at Time 1 predicted more overall difficulties for children. The regression models were not statistically significant for any dimension of the SDQ.

Table 28. Risk and protective factors associated with children’s adjustment (as measured by the SDQ) at Time 2

|   | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | Children’s Emotional Problems | Conduct Problems | Total Difficulties | Pro-Social Behaviour |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                              |                        |                               |                  |                    |                      |
| Frequency of family contact during imprisonment       |                        | -.25                          | -.05             | -.07               | .07                  |
| Quality of parents’ communication during imprisonment |                        | -.01                          | -.00             | .15                | .16                  |
| Quality of parents’ relationship                      |                        | -.12                          | -.34**           | -.13               | .37**                |
| Fathers involvement with children before prison       |                        | -.11                          | -.13             | -.03               | .13                  |
| Parents’ material circumstances                       |                        | -.23                          | .03              | -.29*              | .06                  |
| Parents’ support from family and friends              |                        | -.20                          | -.24             | -.23               | .15                  |
| Father’s involvement with the criminal justice system |                        | .05                           | -.21             | -.10               | .17                  |
| <b>Total variance explained (R<sup>2</sup>)</b>       |                        | .13                           | .27              | .23                | .23                  |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$  two-tailed.  $n = 41 - 42$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

### Children’s Self-Reported Adjustment

A further perspective on children’s adjustment was provided by the data from the children’s interviews. Thirty five children in the 40 families were interviewed at Time 1 and Time 2, and their ages ranged from 4 to 18 years. It was evident from our interviews that adolescents’ experiences differed to those younger in age, for example, with regard to feelings of stigma and encounters with the police. We therefore conducted analyses for two age groups to take these differences into account: 11 years and under ( $n = 24$ ) and 12 years and over ( $n = 11$ ). In order to develop quantifiable measures for the analyses from the largely qualitative data, we developed numerical scales based on children’s comments about their experiences.

## Children 11 Years and Under

The experiences of children in this age group centred mainly on the family and their life at school. We developed four outcome variables from their reports: quality of relationship with their father, experiences of bullying, and educational and behavioural difficulties at school.

### *Quality of relationship with their father*

At Time 2, the children were asked what it was like now that their father was around, how they felt about their father being around and how they got on with their father. The mean scores for these three variables were used to form this outcome measure. The scale for each variable was 0 to 2, where 0 = *negative comments* and 2 = *positive comments*.

### *Experiences of bullying*

Children's reports of whether they had been bullied by classmates or other youngsters were measured on a scale from 0 to 2, where 0 = *no reports of bullying*, 1 = *verbal bullying* and 2 = *physical bullying*.

### *Educational difficulties*

The children were asked whether they had trouble with education. Their answers were grouped on a scale of 0 to 2, where 0 = *no difficulties with education* and 2 = *general educational difficulties*.

### *Trouble with behaviour at school*

Children's reports of trouble with behaviour at school were used to form this dichotomous outcome measure, where 0 = *no trouble* and 1 = *trouble with behaviour*.

We conducted correlation analyses between the predictors at Time 1 and the children's outcomes at Time 2. We used the seven predictors identified from the mothers' and fathers' data (averaged for both parents). In addition, we developed three predictor variables from the children's interview data: relationship with dad, teacher relations, and help from others.

### *Relationship with father*

This predictor was formed from the mean scores of the children's assessment of their relationship with their father before prison, how they felt when they saw their father in prison, and their expectations for

the relationship after prison. The children’s comments were rated on a scale, where 0 = *negative comments* and 2 = *positive comments*.

*Teacher relations*

This predictor was based on children’s views of their relationships with their teachers. The scale ranged from 0 to 2, where 0 = *negative comments* and 2 = *positive comments*.

*Help from others*

This predictor was based on the children’s reports of help they had received from family and friends and from outside organisations. The scale ranged from 0 to 2, where 0 = *no help* and 2 = *help from two or more sources*.

The relations between these outcomes and the Time 1 predictors are shown in Table 29.

*Table 29.* Risk and protective factors associated with children’s reported outcomes at Time 2 (11 years and under)

| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                                 | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | Relationship with father | Experience of bullying | Learning difficulties | Trouble with behaviour at school |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Quality of parents’ relationship                         |                        | .27                      | -.41*                  | -.24                  | .15                              |
| Quality of parents’ communication during prison sentence |                        | .16                      | .02                    | -.43**                | -.05                             |
| Father’s involvement with children before prison         |                        | .26                      | -.34                   | -.35*                 | .07                              |
| Parents’ support from family and friends                 |                        | .42**                    | -.19                   | -.32                  | .02                              |
| Children’s relationship with father                      |                        | .37*                     | -.42*                  | -.25                  | .30                              |
| Children’s relationship with teachers                    |                        | .39*                     | .08                    | -.44**                | -.17                             |
| Children’s help from others                              |                        | -.13                     | .41*                   | -.22                  | -.40*                            |

\**p* < .10, \*\**p* < .05, and \*\*\**p* < .01, two-tailed. *n* = 22-24, variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

### *Relationship with father*

Positive relationships between the children and the father at Time 2 were predicted by good relationships with the father and good relationships with teachers at Time 1 and parents' support from family and friends.

### *Experiences of bullying*

Lower quality relationships with the father and between parents at Time 1 were associated with greater problems with bullying at Time 2. Help from others at Time 1 was also associated with more bullying at Time 2. This may be an indication of the support children were receiving as a consequence of poorer family relationships at Time 1.

### *Difficulties with learning*

Higher levels of fathers' involvement with the children, better quality of communication between parents and better relationships with teachers at Time 1 predicted fewer educational difficulties for children at Time 2.

### *Trouble with behaviour at school*

Help from others at Time 1 predicted less trouble with behaviour at school at Time 2.

## **Children 12 Years and Over**

In addition to family and school experiences, we also looked at the level of involvement the youth in this group of young people had with the police. The number of youth was small and the results should not be widely generalised. We developed three outcome variables from the youngsters' reports:

### *Relationship with father*

This was the same measure as used for the younger age group.

### *School achievement*

Young people's reports of what they were good at and what they had difficulty with at school were combined to form this outcome measure. The scale for each variable was 0 to 2, where 0 = *negative comments* and 2 = *positive comments*.

*Trouble or encounters with the police*

The youngsters' reports of trouble with police were recorded, where 0 = *no trouble/encounters with police* and 1 = *trouble/encounters with police*.

The same predictor variables as for the younger children were used in the analyses. The results are shown in Table 30.

*Table 30.* Risk and protective factors associated with children's reported outcomes at Time 2 (12 years and over)

|  | <b>Time 2 outcomes</b> | Relationship with father | School achievement | Trouble/encounters with police |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Time 1 predictors</b>                                 |                        |                          |                    |                                |
| Quality of parents' relationship                         |                        | .53*                     | .62*               | -.65**                         |
| Quality of parents' communication during prison sentence |                        | .78***                   | .60*               | -.64**                         |
| Father's involvement with children before prison         |                        | .27                      | .78***             | -.75***                        |
| Parents' support from family and friends                 |                        | .24                      | .13                | -.28                           |
| Children's relationship with father                      |                        | .66**                    | .29                | .38                            |
| Children's relationship with teachers                    |                        | .18                      | -.49               | .20                            |
| Children's help from others                              |                        | .15                      | .00                | -.36                           |

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , and \*\*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.  $n = 10-11$ , variation due to missing data or non-applicable items.

Despite the small number of cases, there were various significant and relatively strong correlations between the predictors and outcomes. Other coefficients went in the expected direction but did not reach statistical significance because of the small size of the sub-sample (e.g., poor relationships with teachers at Time 1 versus low school achievement at Time 2).

### *Relationship with father*

Positive relationships between the children and the father at Time 2 were predicted by good relationships with the father and good relationships between the parents and the quality of parents' communication at Time 1.

### *School achievement*

Higher levels of achievement at school were predicted by a good quality of parents' communication and the quality of their relationship at Time 1, and greater involvement by the father with his children before prison.

### *Trouble or encounters with the police*

The quality of parents' communication during imprisonment, the quality of their relationship at Time 1, and a greater involvement of the father with his children before prison predicted fewer problems with the police at Time 2.

### 3.4 Comparing Families with Relatively Smooth Versus Difficult Adjustment

#### *Distinguishing between families*

The previous data analyses were primarily variable-oriented. This means that we investigated more or less general predictors of resettlement for the families in the study. The variables were analysed separately, or in conjunction (as in the regression models). However, in practice, we often have to deal with individual cases or more specific types of families. Therefore, it is important to investigate not only relations between variables, but also to carry out typological analyses. For this purpose, we compared families who, in general, had a relatively successful adjustment and resettlement with families who had more problems to cope with during the fathers' imprisonment and release.

To evaluate the different types of families, a cluster analysis was undertaken with variables measuring key resettlement outcomes. Cluster analysis is a statistical technique that groups together those cases (e.g., families) that are similar on a number of characteristics, and differ from other groups in this respect. To identify these groups, we combined the perspectives of family members (i.e., fathers, mothers and children who were interviewed) on the quality of family relationships at Time 2 between the mother and father (mother and father perspectives) and between the children and each of their parents (child, mother and father perspectives). These measures of family relationships were used as a basis for grouping the families together with measures of other key Time 2 outcomes: parents' assessments of fathers' mothers' and children's adjustment; parents' scores from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (which gave an indication of physical and psychological well-being); parents' income; and fathers' desistance from crime versus return to prison. Families who showed a relatively large number of positive characteristics could be seen as well-adapting, whereas families with low scores seemed to have particularly pronounced difficulties. Cluster analysis generates such groups according to indices of closest similarity or dissimilarity between families.

As these outcome measures comprised both categorical and continuous variables, a two-step cluster analysis was conducted (statistical details of the analysis can be made available on request). The analysis revealed two significantly different clusters. The first cluster contained 18 families that adapted relatively well. The second included nine families with rather serious adaptation problems overall. The other families were somewhere in between but did not form a separate homogenous group. Table 31 shows the comparison of the two groups with regards to the variables that have been used for the

clustering (ordered according to empirical relevance). The most marked distinction between the two clusters of families related to the quality of the mother/father relationship and the adjustment of family members. The least differences were in parents' weekly income and the mothers' relationship with her children. There were also clear differences between both groups regarding the extent of mothers' and fathers' health problems. Whether the fathers had returned to prison appeared to be less relevant; however, this is possibly due to the small number of men who had been reconvicted within a few months after release.

*Table 31. Cluster model: Family groups*

| <b>Time 2 Outcomes (in order of weighting in the model)</b> | <b>Cluster 1</b>     | <b>Cluster 2</b>    |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|
|   | <b>(18 families)</b> | <b>(9 families)</b> |
|   | <b>M</b>             | <b>M</b>            |
|   | <b>(SD)</b>          | <b>(SD)</b>         |
| Quality of mother/father relationship <sup>a</sup>          | 4.18                 | 1.97                |
|   | (.64)                | (.86)               |
| Children's adjustment <sup>a</sup>                          | 4.61                 | 3.13                |
|   | (.37)                | (.78)               |
| Mothers' adjustment <sup>a</sup>                            | 4.13                 | 2.67                |
|   | (.54)                | (.56)               |
| Fathers' adjustment <sup>a</sup>                            | 4.10                 | 2.47                |
|   | (.61)                | (.96)               |
| Fathers' relationship with children <sup>a</sup>            | 4.46                 | 3.43                |
|   | (.46)                | (.85)               |
| Fathers' health problems (GHQ-12 scores) <sup>b</sup>       | 8.44                 | 17.33               |
|   | (5.72)               | (10.60)             |
| Mothers' health problems (GHQ-12 scores) <sup>b</sup>       | 8.83                 | 16.33               |
|   | (5.9)                | (7.52)              |
| Fathers' weekly income (£)                                  | 241.75               | 537.67              |
|   | (191.61)             | (951.19)            |
| Number of fathers returned to prison                        | 0                    | 3                   |
| Mothers' relationship with children <sup>a</sup>            | 3.73                 | 3.45                |
|   | (.59)                | (.55)               |
| Mothers' weekly household income (£)                        | 232.80               | 331.22              |
|   | (134.80)             | (443.00)            |

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. <sup>a</sup>5-point scales. <sup>b</sup>Score range was 0-36 (where high scores indicated more problems).

Although most of the outcome variables differentiated plausibly between the two clusters, the income variables went in an unexpected direction: those families who were grouped as having serious adaption problems had, on average, a larger income for both the fathers and the mothers (although this was less pronounced for the mothers). Various issues must be taken into account here: the standard deviation

for both variables was much larger for the cluster with more adjustment problems overall, thus indicating some outliers with a particularly good financial situation who may have had a particular influence on the findings. As Table 22 has shown, the financial situation at Time 2 was mainly related to financial circumstances at Time 1 and support from family and friends, but not to the relationship and communication variables that were most predictive of other positive outcomes. Perhaps fathers with a relatively good income before and after imprisonment may have particular problems with regard to social adaptation and relationships, whereas others' adjustment difficulties may be more driven by material problems. However, for a sound investigation of such issues, we would need larger subgroups in our cluster analysis. We found no statistically significant differences between the two clusters of families on other key characteristics such as age, ethnicity, father's offence, and length of father's sentence.

#### *Predictors of difference*

After forming the two contrasting groups of families, we investigated which Time 1 predictors accounted for most of the differences between them. For this analysis, we used the seven Time 1 variables that had been identified earlier as general predictors of family outcomes: quality of the mother/father relationship, frequency of contact and quality of communication with the father in prison, parents' material resources, support from family and friends, fathers' involvement with children before prison, and fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system. The number of parenting courses the father attended while in prison was also included in the analysis, as the more differentiated analyses had shown that this is a relevant predictor. In addition, exploratory t-tests had revealed a significant difference ( $p < .10$ ) in the variable's mean scores between the two family clusters.

The results of this discriminant analysis revealed a significant association between the two family groups and all predictors apart from fathers' involvement with the criminal justice system and parents' material resources (see Table 32).

The strongest predictor was the quality of the parents' relationship (discriminant factor loading = .70), followed by the frequency of contact between the father and family during the prison sentence (.40) and the father's involvement with his children before prison (.37). The model accounted for 69 per cent of the variability between the groups. Using the variables of Table 32, 82 per cent of the families were

correctly classified as more versus less successful in their overall adaption and resettlement. This indicates good predictive validity.

*Table 32. Discriminant Analysis of Family Clusters*

| <b>Time 1 Predictors</b>  | <b>F-value</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Quality of mother/father relationship                                     | 28.00***       |
| Frequency of contact between father and family                            | 9.20**         |
| Father's involvement with children at Time 1                              | 7.70**         |
| Support for mother and father from family and friends                     | 4.22*          |
| Quality of communication between mother and father                        | 3.90*          |
| Number of fatherhood/parenting courses attended by father during sentence | 3.10*          |
| Parents' material resources   | .68            |
| Father's involvement with the criminal justice system                     | .00            |

\* $p < .10$  \*\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .01$

These typological findings fit well with the previous variable-oriented results. They clearly indicate the characteristics that are most relevant for a positive whole-family adaptation: the quality of the relationship between the mother and father, the frequency of contact between the father and his family during his imprisonment, the father's involvement with his children at Time 1, the level of support both parents received from family and friends, the quality of communication between the parents during the prison sentence, and more frequent participation in parenting courses of the father.

## 3.5 Qualitative Analyses

### 3.5.1 Children's Perspectives

The 35 children who were old enough to be interviewed in the study were aged between 4 to 18 years: 15 were aged 7 and under, nine were between the ages of 8 and 11, and 11 were aged 12 or over. Five were BAME and the rest were White British. They came from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and from different family 'set-ups'. The quality of their relationships with their parents varied as did their friendships and engagement with others outside the home. The following section provides insight into the experiences of these children and young people in their own words.

#### Absence and Loss

The absence of their father provoked mixed reactions amongst the children interviewed. For many, the sense of loss resulting from their father's or stepfather's absence was profound and challenging. Until his imprisonment, their father had been a major source of care and stability: *"He's been there for me and brought me up"* (Josh, 13); *"He makes us feel like his kids"* (Kwesi, 18); *"Dad used to support me at football matches"* (Lydia, 8). For young people whose father had been a regular part of their everyday lives, there was an erosion of 'normality': *"He's not there when I wake up in the morning"* (Jake, 15). One girl went to stay with her grandmother: *"I try not to spend time here because it upsets me that dad's not here"* (Leah, 16). There were practical changes too, such as moving house or having to catch the bus instead of taking the car. Many wished for a return to an earlier time: *"I would like to live in one house, not having to move our stuff back and forth"* (Peter, 15).

Children spoke of a loss of fun and play in their lives. They had enjoyed various activities with their fathers: *"I used to swim with dad every week"* (Kayleigh, 7); *"We used to go to the beach"* (Alicia, 10). *"It was fun when dad was around – he took us to the park, played games"* (Sara, 10); *"I like that dad tickles us"* (Sian, 6); *"(It was) fun. We used to play fight"* (Alex, 13).

For some, the father had been the main authority figure. In his absence, mothers often took on a more overtly disciplinary role (e.g., *"Mum's a bit stricter"*, Chris, 13), but in some cases, boundaries faded or

were not heeded (e.g., *"I can get away with more stuff"*, Josh, 13); *"I get grounded but I go out anyway"*, Jake, 15).

## Emotions

The fathers' absence had emotional consequences. For many of the children, fathers were a source of happiness: *"I'm happy when he is at home"* (Callum, 8); *"I was always happy"* (Alicia, 10). Their happiness was closely related to their mothers' happiness too: *"I like it when he's with my mum because it makes her happy"* (Tola, 15); *"Mum's not happy now I'm sad about my daddy"* (Luke, 4).

These young people talked of intense sadness: *"We only come here when dad's here so when he's not it feels like a big chunk is missing"* (Julia, 18); *"I feel sad. I didn't like it when I saw him going away. It made me cry"* (Marie, 6); *"I get sad when I think about why dad left me but I try not to think about it"* (Kwesi, 18); *"(I) feel sad with dad being away. Everything is different"* (Joe, 5). Some young people said they were eventually able to adjust: *"I was upset at first but then got used to it"* (Chris, 13). For others, sadness was continually present. They talked of time passing slowly and feeling helpless: *"It's been a long time"* (Steven, 7); *"I wish he'd come home quicker"* (Amy, 10); *"I just wait and wait for a long time for daddy to come back. I lie on the sofa"* (Luke, 4).

Many said they were *"worried"* and *"anxious"* when asked about their father being away. They felt insecure and some feared that he would never return: *"(I'm) worried in case he might not come (back)"* (Callum, 8); *"(I feel) a bit sad, bit worried"* (Tom, 7); *"(A bad day is) when my dad's not here and I'm always really worried"* (Abi, 8); *"(A good day is) when my daddy was always here and looking after me"* (Marie 6). Some were afraid that their mother would go away too: *"When my mum told me I cried and wouldn't leave my mum at school"* (Kayleigh, 7).

Some young people expressed anger at their father's imprisonment: *"I wasn't told at first what was going on. It was a shock when they did tell me...I was really angry at first"* (Peter, 15); *"I feel sad, bored, sometimes angry that dad's not around"* (Ben, 11). For some of the older boys, in particular, their lives seemed *"on the edge"*. The absence of a father-figure coincided with a precariousness about the direction of their lives. They had already had encounters with police (e.g., stop and search, trespassing, throwing snowballs, theft). Their school experiences were unsettled and there was volatility to their behaviour.

The young people who knew their father was in prison (around 80 per cent of those interviewed) also expressed concern about how others would react if they knew. Many did not talk much about their situation to their friends, and some did not talk to anyone at all: *"I've just talked to one person because she's good at keeping secrets"* (Amy, 10); *"Only one friend knows. I don't tell anyone. I keep it quiet but sometimes talk to mum"* (Jessie, 13); *"I didn't tell friends but they saw it in papers. Don't talk about it much"* (Julia, 18); *"I don't talk about it"* (Josh, 13).

The fear underpinning their secrecy could lead to a sense of isolation and withdrawal. One girl thought she would get expelled from school if it was known about her father: *"I don't talk to people at school, don't talk to teachers. I don't want anybody to get me into trouble"* (Lydia, 8). When others did find out, relationships could be difficult: *"They call me names, sometimes about my dad being in prison, sometimes not. Sometimes I get into fights"* (Ellen, 8); *"A girl saw it in the paper and told the whole school...some people took the Mickey out of me as I haven't got a dad"* (Max, 11).

Five children found respite in their father's absence for it had brought an end to stress at home. They spoke of arguments between their parents: *"When I was little my mum and dad used to fight"* (Shana, 7). Children in two families talked about their concerns when their father was drunk: *"I feel very scared (when dad is around) as I once got into trouble and he got drunk and was very angry... and made me cry a lot"* (Max, 11); *"When he's not drinking, he's a normal dad. When he's drinking he's a stranger"* (Ben, 11).

### **Coping and Support**

For many of the children in the study, their mother was a key source of physical comfort and emotional support. When asked, "What do you do when you are sad?", they replied: *"Go and tell mummy"* (Elliott, 7); *"I cuddle mummy"* (Laura, 8); *"I go to mummy for a cuddle"* (Tom, 7); *"I mostly talk to mum but try not to upset her"* (Julia, 18); *"I tell mum first - that makes me feel better"* (Jessie, 13). Others drew on the support of brothers and sisters: *"They care for me a lot. Always help me"* (Amy, 10); *"They were always there when dad went away"* (Leah, 16); *"(She) stays in the house with me. I'm not home alone. I feel safer"* (Peter, 15). Family relatives and friends were also mentioned: *"Everyone in my family has helped – nanny, grandma, grandpa, Darren – lots of family"* (Marie, 6); *"a lot of neighbours round here (have helped) and family friends"* (Jessie, 13).

Some young people drew on the support of one or two close friends: *"I talked to mates because I was upset when dad first went away"* (Marie, 12); *"If I feel upset or angry they calm me down, they*

*understand and help me*" (Sara, 10); *"a friend has a dad in prison as well so she knows how I feel"* (Jessie, 13). Occasionally there was a supportive teacher in school: *"My head of year is helpful. He listens"* (Jake, 15). Social Services were also involved with a small number of the children in the study, but their role was not always understood: *"loads of people come to talk to me but I don't know what it's all about"* (Max, 11).

For some children, their absent father was a source of support. They would speak to him on the phone: *"(When I am sad) I cry and stop and ring up dad"* (Alicia, 10). One brother and sister took consolation in a photo of their father: *"I look at the photo of dad on the bedroom wall"* (Elliott, 7); *"I go to his picture in our room and look at him and kiss it"* (Ellen, 8). Others were comforted by looking forward to the time when he would be back again: *"When he's back I'll cuddle him everyday"* (Sian, 6).

Some children kept their troubles to themselves. They did not seek the support of others: *"I don't talk to anyone"* (Tom, 7); *"(When I'm sad) I go upstairs in my room and try not to think about it"* (Callum, 8); *"I mostly keep it bottled inside; don't think it helps to talk about it because it won't get him out any sooner"* (Leah, 16). Some drew on inner resources to cope: *"I walk around the block to calm myself down"* (Jessie, 13).

Children could be providers of support too: *"When daddy's sad, I draw him a picture"* (Alesha, 5). Three of the older young people spoke of helping with the family. They aided their mothers in the home and looked after younger brothers or sisters. The opportunity to play a supportive role appeared to lessen the anxiety associated with a lack of control: *"I feel more optimistic now, not overly scared, I'm more involved"* (Julia, 18).

### **Prison Visits**

The majority ( $n = 27$ ) of the children interviewed talked about visiting their fathers in prison. They spoke of their happiness at seeing their fathers again: *"I liked it when he comes through the gates. Seeing him makes me feel really happy"* (Sara, 10). It was a valued opportunity to catch up with news: *"I like talking to him, catching up on letting him know what I've been doing... I don't like having a limit on the time you spend"* (Ben, 11). Sometimes, however, it was difficult when the relationship between mother and father became strained: *"I don't like it when he and mum don't get along"* (Kayleigh, 7).

Many of the young people spoke of their preference for children's or families' visits, as they enabled a more 'normal' interaction with the father: *"I like it when he doesn't have to wear the red vest because he*

*is like my dad, not like a prisoner” (Sara, 10). “I’m happy and smile at my daddy. He lets me sit on his lap” (Marie, 6); “I like seeing him. He plays with me, he plays football” (Steven, 7).*

There were, however, also negative comments about the prison visits. For some, the journey was long and tiring (e.g., *“I didn’t like the trip”*, Peter, 15), the environment was intimidating (e.g., *“I’m scared of dogs sniffing”*, Sara, 10), and ordinary visits were tedious (e.g., *“I feel bored when it’s a normal visit and I have to wait a long time”*, Sam, 7). There was also the sadness of saying ‘goodbye’: *“I don’t like leaving. It’s weird leaving him behind”* (Leah, 16).

### **Expectations**

The majority of the children in the study were very much looking forward to their father’s return: *“(I’ll be) happy and proud and excited”* (Tim, 5); *“I will be happy and cuddly. I will cuddle him every day”* (Sian, 6); *“Everyone will be happy in my family”* (Alesha, 5); *“Things will change from me being ashamed to me being excited and happy”* (Lydia, 8). Some anticipated a return to how things were before: *“(It will be) back to normal”* (Julia, 18); *“He will take me to school”* (Marie, 6); *“It will be better because I can go with my friends and dad can go too to football matches and shopping”* (Ben, 11). Others looked forward to special outings: *“I’ll be excited. We’ll go to the zoo together”* (Tom, 7).

Some of the older young people were aware that there would be some re-adjustment on their part and on the part of their fathers. Some were optimistic, but others expressed reservations about the prospect of the father returning: *“Definitely different, in a good way. Will take some getting used to”* (Jake, 15); *“Hard, not for us, but for him; he’ll have to get used to being out, going to shops and the like”* (Leah, 16); *“Dunno. Mum will get along with him because he’s got kids with her. My life won’t change much”* (Josh, 13); *“It will be changed. More arguments and different rules”* (Jessie, 13).

### **On the Father’s Return**

Many families resumed the living arrangements they had before the father went to prison, but there were a few changes: two fathers moved to live with the mother and children, two fathers moved out and one father lived with the family part-time. Two fathers were back in prison, affecting four of the children interviewed, and two others were prevented from moving back with their children because of their licence conditions.

In many cases, children’s experiences after their father’s return appeared to match their optimistic expectations. Several fathers resumed their role as provider and carer: *“Every time I say, ‘Can you help*

*me with something?', he always does it. He buys me things" (Amy, 10); "I go and tell dad and he sorts it out" (Marie, 12) "He's always there for us" (Julia, 18). There was delight that things were back to normal: "Very very happy. I don't have to get the bus to football anymore" (Tom,7); "Today I liked it because daddy picked me up from school" (Marie 6); "I like going downstairs with him early, watching TV, having milk and biscuits, having breakfast with him" (Tim, 5); "At weekends when I play football, dad comes" (Jake 15); "All's good. Back to normal now he's had his tag off. We see him most days of the week and the whole weekend" (Julia 18). They played and had fun together once more: "When he was away it was sad and quiet. Now it's fun and happy" (Amy, 10); "Funny, fun. We rest and watch telly. (We) play until he tells me to calm down" (Luke, 4); "I go fishing with dad... every day in the summer" (Alex, 13). Some young people talked of an improvement to their well-being: "It's less stressful" (Alex, 13); "I am not as upset or angry as I used to be" (Sara, 10); "We're all happier now that dad is around" (Kwesi, 18).*

For several, the sense and importance of 'family' was heightened: *"I got my dad back, it's like my family's been put back together. When dad was away I basically lived with my Nan but now I'm back home and my sisters are home more" (Leah, 16); "(Now) we spend more time together. Me, mum and my brother didn't spend much time together before when dad was in prison. We make more time now" (Julia, 18); "Best thing is staying indoors with mum and dad" (Tim, 5). Where the father was not living with them, other children talked with enthusiasm about their visits to see him. These days often involved special activities, for example, rock-climbing, going to the zoo, or going for bike-rides. They were highly valued: "A good day is when I see dad" (Ellen, 8).*

However, for other young people, their father's return was disappointing and distressing. Some were caught up in the breakdown of their parents' relationship: *"Me and Jessie cry when mummy and daddy argue. I think it's all my fault. I don't know why.... why daddy moved. Maybe it's because of mummy and him" (Callum, 8); "(I feel) sad because mum and dad are arguing. Mum has a friend (a boy) and daddy doesn't want him to hurt me and my sister" (Sam, 7).*

Others felt displaced and forgotten: *"When dad is back I get bored. He sleeps in mummy's bed" (Steven, 7); "He doesn't play with me much. He tells me off quite a lot" (Laura, 7); "(I wish mum) would do more activities and games with me" (Max, 11). Lydia who had said she would be "excited and happy" when her stepfather returned, felt very differently after his release: "We do nothing now, dad's always out". Her health and well-being had deteriorated: "I never have a good day... I always have a bad dinner, a headache or a cough or something bad" (Lydia, 8).*

Other young people were ashamed of their father's behaviour since he had returned and had distanced themselves from him. One boy did not want to visit his stepfather who was back in prison: *"Because of what he's done to my mum"* (Josh, 13). His sister said she was *"angry, ashamed, bored, scared"* by what had happened (Kayleigh, 7). Another boy said he only phoned and sent texts to his father now because *"he's embarrassing and I don't like everybody seeing him when he's drunk"* (Ben, 11). In his first interview, Ben had said that he was looking forward to going out with his father and his friends to football matches, but since his father's release he has avoided him. He does not tell his father where he is playing football so that he won't come to watch: *"I'm more scared that I will see him somewhere when I'm with my friends"*.

There were some changes to the roles of authority within families after the fathers' return, and responses were mixed. Tola (15) acknowledged his stepfather's positive role as an authority figure: *"Before I got grounded, now nothing. (Things are) good now at school. No drugs or alcohol. No more trouble with police"*. Leah (16) felt that her father's approach had improved: *"He's still strict but not as before. Before when he was depressed he used to scream and shout but now he's on his tablets, he's realised that screaming/shouting don't get you nowhere. When things go wrong he sits us down and talks to us about it"*.

In contrast, children from a family where the parents' marriage was breaking down, found their father's approach to discipline harsh and erratic: *"Once I tried to make toast when I came home from school like I normally do and he shouted at me"* (Max, 11); *"I felt 'angry, sort of sad or scared. He was always starting arguments. Sometimes he'd tell us off for no reason when he was drunk"* (Jessie, 13).

For Jake (15), his father's return had led to a reduction of his authority: *"Things that I used to have to do but don't have to do them now. I used to have a 'leading man role' and I liked it. It's hard now."*

However, he felt that their relationship was maturing: *"There's more trust between dad and me. He lets me do things more and we do things together – never used to before"*. At Time 1, some of the older children took on responsibility and appreciated this role: *"I sometimes tell mum what to do, like call the police when dad was here"*; *"It makes me feel useful"* (Kwesi, 18, on looking after his young brother).

When asked about their hopes for the future, young people talked about improvements to their material circumstances: *"A new house"* (Kayleigh, 7); *"A nice house, nice car"* (Alesha, 5); *"A pretty bedroom"* (Laura, 7); *"I wish I could be rich and buy a nice house with a swimming pool"* (Sam, 7). Many of the young people who were in unsettled circumstances expressed a wish for their father to remain a

close and positive presence in their lives and for their family relationships to be stable: *“(I wish) that daddy would be nice, if he could live with us”* (Max, 11); *“(I wish) to have a good dad”* (Ben, 11); *“I would like to live with my mum AND dad”* (Ellen, 8); *“(Our family) needs to chill out a bit, not take things too far, not take it to heart”* (Jake, 15); *“We need a nice break just to get away for two weeks, spend family time without being disrupted”* (Leah, 16). However, one girl said she would like it if *“my parents went away and I was free to do whatever I want and make a big mess”* (Laura, 7).

## **Reflections**

*“It’s hard for me having a dad in prison who has come out”* (Sam, 7).

There was a sense of fragility about the well-being of most of the children and young people interviewed in the study. Their fathers often represented security and safety in their lives and their absence provoked feelings of anxiety, confusion and anger. Many kept his imprisonment concealed from others. Underpinning this secrecy was a fear of getting into trouble, of not being liked, and a worry about engaging fully and openly with people outside the home. The children sought comfort and reassurance from those around them. For most young people, this was found either from their mothers, their friends or relatives. Where support was not easily found, they coped alone. The opportunity to visit their father in a welcoming environment was important but these experiences could also be challenging, both practically and emotionally. Their fathers’ return was often a source of happiness but this emotion eluded those children who experienced the breakdown of their parents’ relationships or the re-appearance of a father’s alcohol addiction. They all spoke of their hopes for the future: for improved material conditions, for happier and closer relationships with their parents, but in these pipedreams too lay evidence of their deeply-rooted vulnerabilities.

### **3.5.2 Family Case Studies**

#### **Relationship Breakdown**

Twenty three year old Darren reported having a difficult and disrupted childhood. He had lived with his partner, Tammy, since leaving care. Tammy became pregnant at age 14, and they have two sons, aged 3 and 6. Darren had a good work record, mostly employed as a cleaner. Darren's self-reported alcohol consumption indicated that he was a heavy drinker, although he did not see this as a problem. Though not a drug user, he was serving a three year sentence (his second) for drug dealing.

The couple reported that their relationship was under strain when Darren got arrested. At their pre-release interviews, both partners expressed hope that things would improve. The oldest child reacted negatively to dad being in prison, and his behaviour and schoolwork suffered. Darren was keen to be a good father. He had regular children's visits, and had participated in parenting courses in prison as well as 'Storybook Dads'. He had also acquired some trade qualifications to support his chances of finding work after release.

However, before his release, Darren and Tammy broke up. Darren came out of prison with nowhere to live and no job. He reported that he found it difficult to adjust to the lack of routine and began drinking heavily again. He commented that he wished there had been some sort of assistance or mediation to help him with the challenges he faced after release. After three months out on 'Tag', Darren was re-arrested and went back to prison.

Tammy had met a new partner and started a college course. She felt angry about Darren's drinking and said he was unreliable. Their six year old son was experiencing difficulties adjusting to the changes. He commented that he looked forward to his father coming out of prison again.

#### **Parental Relationship**

Daniel and Hayley are a young couple in their early 20s. They had been living together for a year, prior to Daniel's imprisonment. Hayley has a 3 year old son, Fraser, from a previous relationship.

Daniel's two-year sentence for his first offence came as a shock to the family. Both partners reported stable childhoods and are close to their extended families. Neither reported any drug or alcohol

problems. They were both in good health, although prison had caused Daniel to become anxious and depressed. Both described their relationship as very good at Time 1.

The couple did not want Fraser to know that his dad was in prison, so only Hayley visited Daniel in prison. Daniel was anxious to do his best for Fraser, and completed an Ormiston parenting course while inside. He also sent Fraser cards and pictures regularly and made a story tape for him. Daniel had also completed a number of vocational courses, but worried about finding a job on release.

At Time 2, the couple were still together, although Daniel slept at his parents' home due to his licence conditions. The partners reported that the prison experience had actually brought them closer. They had received no formal support from organisations, but had received considerable support from their families. Daniel reported that he was trying to put his learning from the parenting course into practice and felt he and Fraser were bonding well.

Daniel had not offended again. However, he had been unable to get a job and felt stressed about this and the resulting financial deprivation for the family. The couple commented that they hoped that their good relationship would help them cope with these pressures.

### **Children's Views of Dad's Release**

Lizzie is 12 and Chris is 10. She is shy but friendly and sociable. She appeared to like school and most lessons. In her primary school, she was bullied because of her auburn hair, but she now has a lot of friends.

Lizzie used to visit her dad in prison, but he comes out on Home Leave now. She thought that she saw him enough, but reported that she often felt let down because he said he would take her on outings and then didn't. She said dad sometimes showed an interest in her schoolwork and problems, but never spent time with her. When he returned home, Lizzie thought things would be different because there would be different rules and more arguments. She was worried about what it would be like. Lizzie had only told one friend where dad was but she said she generally kept it quiet. When asked what her three wishes were, Lizzie wished that her dad would stop saying 'no' when she asked to go somewhere, that dad would be a lot nicer and speak more politely, and would take them to places he promised.

Ten year old Chris said he was worried and scared about what life would be like when his dad came home. He said that he was sad when dad first went to prison, but he is happy now that he is not around.

Chris's friendships got worse after dad went to prison and some people took the 'mick' out of him. Someone at school read about his dad in the newspaper and told his classmates. He had been bullied by two boys who pushed and shouted at him. Chris told his mum and she spoke to the teacher. He said the bullying has been worse since his dad had been in prison. Chris had been in trouble with the police for shoplifting. He paid some money for the cards he stole.

Chris said that he was excited when he first saw his dad on Home Leave, but then became scared because dad started to shout and tell him off. Chris said he felt scared once when he got into trouble when dad was drunk and shouted at him. This made Chris cry. Sometimes they watched TV together.

If Chris could have three wishes, he would like to have more friends and a better dad. He would either like mum to get a new husband or for his dad to spend more time with him playing football and games. He said that would make life better for him and his family.

### **Parents' Adjustment and Support**

Mark and Jenny are a young couple with a three year old daughter, Tianna. They had never lived together but Mark was a regular visitor to Jenny and Tianna's small flat before he went to prison for drug offences.

Interviewed during Mark's imprisonment, Jenny described feeling lonely and revealed having suffered with depression when Mark first went to prison. She said she had stopped seeing most of her friends because some of them were 'a bit funny with her'. Her relationship with Mark was somewhat fragile; he had apparently cheated on her, but on balance, she thought the strengths of their relationship outweighed the bad times.

When interviewed again after Mark's release, Jenny hoped that Mark would soon move in with them, although she expressed caution about 'waiting to see whether he'd really changed'. Jenny said Mark was not as involved with their daughter's care as before he went to prison. She had recovered from her

depression and said she now drank much less, stating, “I’m much more able to handle Mark – and myself – now. I’m stronger now.”

Jenny felt her daughter had been badly affected by her dad’s absence. She reported that she asked about him constantly, but she had settled down again now. She had found support in a local playgroup which she said had helped ‘calm her nerves’.

Four months after his release, Mark was struggling. He had received help on release to look for work, but felt that his criminal record held him back from getting a job. He reported that his lack of money and the licence restrictions on his movements were problematic for him. He said that he lived in fear of being recalled if he was seen with any of his old friends. Mark reported that he was mostly off drugs. He had put on weight in prison but could not afford to buy new clothes. He said the ‘Family Man’ course he had done in prison had helped him appreciate his family more and that he was getting on well with Tianna again. However, he felt there should be more help available on release. He said, “I feel totally different, but not in a good way,” and expressed the view that “the system wants you to fail.”

### **Hopes and Fears of a Family**

Peter is 10 years old and was looking forward to his father coming out of prison. He was very excited because he thought he and his friends and his dad could go to football matches and go shopping together. A good memory he had was of his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. He said his dad was there and played with him and gave him presents.

While his dad was in prison, Peter was sad and got angry sometimes, saying he had difficulty holding in his anger when he got into trouble. He felt sad that his dad drinks and said he was not a ‘normal’ dad then, but a stranger who shouted at him. He said it was a bad day when his dad rang him and he was drinking. Peter felt sad and ashamed and phone calls have been difficult sometimes. Peter thinks life would be better if his dad did not drink anymore. His three wishes were that alcohol had not been invented, that he would become a footballer, and that he had a happy family.

Peter’s mother Lisa has recently moved into a larger house and was missing her friends and support network from the area where she lived before. Lisa had not lived with her ex-partner, John, for over 7 years, but still took Peter to see his dad regularly in prison. In one prison, they had a homework club

where they could have tea and toast and play pool. Lisa praised the 'Storybook dad' tape which her ex-partner had made and said Peter played it every night.

Lisa reported that the last time John came out of prison, he quickly went back to drinking. His behaviour changed and he became a 'hard' man. She was angry with him because of the impact this had had on their son. Lisa commented that when John was sober, he was an extremely good dad, but when he drank, his parenting skills vanished and he started stealing again to fund his alcoholism.

Lisa expressed worry about John's release. She said it was like 'walking on eggshells' and had written to him to say that if he started drinking again she would not let him see their son. In the past, it had caused upset with Peter's schooling and his temper. She says Peter was fine until last week when he got angry and got into a fight.

Lisa had recently had some support from Ormiston's London Links project, though would have liked help earlier, and she said she would like more support when John was released as she was worried about him going back to alcohol.

John had a sentence of four years for robbery, but had been in and out of prison since he was 17 years old. He was an alcoholic, but had been to rehab in the nine months before he went to prison, and had not drunk any alcohol. John said that he was aware his drinking affects how much he sees his son but wanted to be there for him in the future to help with school work, to take an interest and support him and take him to football matches. He thought he was a good dad when he was sober. He acknowledged that his imprisonment had destabilised Peter and disrupted his schoolwork.

John had attended several courses in prison including an alcohol programme, educational classes and workshops. He said the alcohol course made him realise alcohol was still a problem. In addition, John had taken a Victim Awareness course which had taught him to look at victims as people and made him aware of the repercussions of his crime.

John expressed anxiety about the future in terms of finding accommodation and work, having enough money, his alcohol use, and the effect his imprisonment had had on his son. Although he was told that he was a serious risk of harm, John will not be on licence when he is released so he will have little

assistance from the Probation Service. John stated that he would have liked resettlement to have begun three or four months earlier so that agencies could help to find him accommodation and employment. John expressed concern that he would not be able to afford to visit his son. He was not sure whether Lisa would let him in to her home.

### **Temporary Happiness and Enduring Drug Problems**

Shane and Linda have a four year old daughter, Carly, and a two year old son, Finlay. Linda described a troubled past, including time spent in a secure unit. She had little support from family and friends, and reported problems with both her physical mental health (depression and agoraphobia). Linda said that her partner, Shane, had been her carer and so it had been very difficult for the family since he had been imprisoned. She was in daily contact with him by phone and said that he was a 'brilliant dad'. Linda also mentioned that while Shane was in prison her income had dropped by a third.

Shane, 36, was interviewed towards the end of his 10 month sentence for robbery. It was his fifth prison sentence. From a happy, stable family background, Shane had only recently divulged to a probation officer that he had been sexually abused as a child, which he felt was the start of his subsequent problems with drink and drugs. He did not enjoy or achieve much at school, and employment was hampered by poor physical and mental health. His longest-held job was for six months.

Shane said he had stopped drinking before he was arrested. He had received counselling and drugs treatment in prison, and had been on a methadone programme. His relationship with Linda and the children was described as close and caring. He also had a drugs support worker arranged for his release.

At Time 2, Linda appeared happy and relieved that Shane was back at home again. She reported that the children were happy to see their father again. She said they were receiving help and support from his parents, and from a voluntary agency with their housing and financial problems.

Shane was later arrested for possession of heroin and recalled to prison. He reported that there had been a mix up with his methadone script which led him quickly to become ill with withdrawal symptoms. He was caught by the police buying a small amount of heroin. He and Linda reported feeling devastated. Shane expressed his determination for the future to 'get clean and live a normal life'.

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Discussion and Conclusions

This study is the first in the United Kingdom and Europe that investigated family sets of fathers and their (ex)partners and children during imprisonment and after release. At both time points, the fathers, mothers and their children (aged 4 and above) were interviewed and completed standardized assessment instruments. The creation of this unique data set involved many hurdles, which may explain why such studies have so rarely been carried out worldwide. First, partially due to a lack of recorded family data in the prisons' files, it was very difficult to recruit those prisoners who fulfilled the (not particularly restrictive) inclusion criteria. Second, as expected, not all (ex)partners agreed to participate in the study when the fathers had enabled us to get in contact with them. Third, there were many logistic and practical obstacles that made the fieldwork very difficult (e.g., care for young children during mothers' interviews). Fourth, although the participants were generally very cooperative, equally, they were sometimes apprehensive about responding to the rather intimate questions. And fifth, although various measures had been taken to obtain valid contact details, some participants (in particular, fathers) could not be contacted after release. These, as well as time and resource reasons, imposed clear limits to the sample size. However, we were able to study 54 complete families during the last four months of the father's imprisonment, and 40 complete families within six months after release. This led to 281 interviews overall, and very satisfactory retention rates of 74.1% for fathers, 90.7% for mothers, and 88.9% for children, which represents approximately three-quarters for whole families.

Although the sample is modest, it is broadly comparable to national characteristics of the male prison population according to age (Prison Reform Trust, 2009) and offence type (Berman, 2011). There was also no highly selective drop-out between the first and second interviews, although ethnic minority prisoners were slightly less represented after release. This may indicate that extra care is needed to ensure that the participation of these respondents is maintained in the course of a longitudinal project. One must also expect that some element of self-selection may have influenced the recruitment and retention processes. However, one cannot say with certainty in which direction such a potential bias may have gone. Our sample may have contained a higher than average number of families with positive relationships because the partners were willing to participate. On the other hand, it is also possible that participating prisoners and their partners sought guidance from the study and the interviews. In addition

to sampling issues, there may have been positive self-presentation by the participants. However, these are general problems and not specific to our study (Lösel & Schmucker, 2002).

This background requires a cautious interpretation and generalisation of our findings. However, the limitations need to be weighed against the strengths of our study; in particular, the investigation of complete family sets, the prospective longitudinal design, and the rich quantitative and qualitative interview and questionnaire data from different informants. This fulfils the requirements of a multi-informant, multi-setting and multi-time approach in developmental criminology (Lösel, 2002). In spite of these advantages, one must bear in mind the following limitations: Due to the nature of the research, we only provided correlational and not experimental data. Therefore, our longitudinal data should be interpreted as predictions and not as causal relations. Whether a causal link is plausible or not depends on theoretical considerations. A further limitation relates to the inter-correlation of the various predictors. For example, the amount of contact between the father and his family during imprisonment is, of course, related to the quality of the family relationship before imprisonment. However, we decided to focus our analyses on the simple predictive relations and not on more complex multivariate analyses (except with regard to the total variance explained in multiple regression analyses). There are three reasons for this decision. First, multivariate analyses often give too much weight to variables that show only slightly stronger relations than others, and such relations may not be replicable (particularly when the sample size is modest). Second, the simple (bivariate) correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 variables are the clearest information for the main target group of this report, i.e. practitioners and policy makers. And third, sophisticated multivariate models may sometimes mask specific target variables that are most relevant for interventions.

Within such a mixed framework of research and practice, our analyses provide new and differentiated insights into the impact of imprisonment and the complexities of the resettlement process for the prisoners and their families. A key finding is the substantial variation between families with regard to their adaptation to the fathers' imprisonment, and their reintegration after his release. On one hand, our results confirmed many risk factors and problems in the resettlement process that are theoretically plausible or have been reported in cross-sectional or prisoner-focused longitudinal studies. On the other hand, we found consistent relationships between various protective factors and families' successful adaptation under adverse circumstances. Against these findings, previous research may have taken an overly negative and deficit-oriented perspective on the consequences of fathers' imprisonment on

children and families. According to our findings, many families found ways of coping with this very difficult life event. We also found key variables that predicted a more or less positive adaptation. This did not only come through our quantitative analyses but also in the qualitative interview data. For example, in the children's views, many of the expected stressors and strains of having a father in prison became obvious. However, where relationships between the fathers and the children were not positive, there were a number of children who mentioned constructive aspects of the separation and real or potential problems of release. Although some of our quantitative results were surprisingly strong, their overall message is also that one should not generalise the potential of negative outcomes too much; a nuanced approach is important. This is also indicated by our clear finding that both family relations before imprisonment and coping processes during imprisonment are particularly salient for a relatively successful adaptation and resettlement.

Our results showed mixed experiences after release:

- the quality of family relationships continued to be relatively stable;
- fathers were less involved with their children than prior to imprisonment;
- according to parents' reports, most children adjusted relatively well to their father's release;
- fathers and mothers reported lower consumption of both alcohol and illegal drugs than prior to the imprisonment;
- fathers and mothers reported improved physical and mental health;
- the experience of stigmatization did not increase;
- the level of support from family and friends remained the same;
- fathers were economically worse off than before prison;
- mothers were in a financially stronger position than during the fathers' imprisonment; and
- approximately one-fifth of the fathers had been returned to prison.

Families' expectations, as compared with their actual experiences, of release showed that:

- overall, their expectations regarding potential problems on release were mostly realistic;
- finding a job and financial difficulties were expected by both partners to be the most frequent problems for fathers, and this was indeed the fathers' experience after release;
- mothers had more negative expectations about the fathers' involvement in criminal activity, alcohol and drug use, but the experiences after release were more positive and similarly rated by both partners; and

- fewer mothers and fathers lived together after release than they had expected before release, although the overall quality of their relationship, on average, did not decrease significantly.

The predictors most consistently linked to positive resettlement outcomes for fathers, mothers and children were:

- high quality of family relationships;
- good communication between the father and family during imprisonment;
- high frequency of contact during imprisonment;
- intensive involvement of fathers with children before prison;
- social support from family and friends;
- participation in family-oriented programmes (when controlled for quality of the parents' relationship);
- more material resources before imprisonment (i.e., income, employment, accommodation); and
- less previous involvement of the father with crime and the criminal justice system.

These variables (or selections of them) predicted a broad range of resettlement outcomes: living together after release; quality of parents' relationship after release; quality of relationship with the children; approaches to problem solving; less problems with alcohol and drugs; less difficulties with accommodation, employment, and finances (mainly predicted by material resources and support networks); fewer health problems of the mothers; desistance from crime; and overall resilience of the fathers. The positive dimensions of the predictors were also related to better adjustment, less conduct problems and more pro-social behaviour of the children (assessed by parents' reports). In the youngsters' self reports, some of these variables predicted less educational difficulties and experiences of bullying at school in younger children. Relationships with teachers and help from others also had a protective function. In the small group of youth in the study, the quality of the parents' relationship and communication and the father's involvement with them before imprisonment predicted a better relationship with the father, better school achievement and less trouble with the police.

Overall, the predictive validity in our study was rather strong. Often between 30 and 60 per cent of the outcome variation at Time 2 could be explained by differences in the predictors at Time 1. The average amount of explained variance for fathers' outcomes was approximately 49 per cent, and for mothers, 33 per cent. Such substantial relations may be partially due to using data from the same informant (e.g.,

father) that typically show larger correlations over time than assessments from different persons (Lösel, 2002). However, we also observed sound predictions across different informants and for 'hard' outcome data (e.g., reoffending).

In addition to variable-oriented data analyses, we also investigated different types of families that we detected in a cluster analysis. Although there was much heterogeneity between the families, we detected two relatively homogeneous subgroups. One group showed a relatively smooth resettlement process according to various outcome criteria, whereas another (smaller) subgroup had a particularly difficult adjustment. Both groups could be clearly predicted by the above mentioned protective factors at Time 1, in particular by the quality of relationship and communication between the parents, the frequency of contact during imprisonment, father's pre-prison involvement with the children, informal support from family and friends, and participation in family-oriented programmes during the sentence. These findings further show that it is necessary to differentiate between risk and protective factors of the family before the fathers' imprisonment and factors that were relevant during and after this critical life event. Even prospective longitudinal data cannot sufficiently disentangle such different sources of influence.

The qualitative parts of the study enriched the quantitative findings and provided further insight into the interaction of pre-prison family characteristics and actual coping patterns. The children's voices indicated that:

- their father's absence often provoked sadness, anxiety, confusion and anger;
- many did not speak about their father's imprisonment out of fear of negative reactions from others;
- most found comfort and support from their mothers, friends or relatives but some coped alone;
- the opportunity to visit their father was important but these experiences could be practically and emotionally challenging; and
- most were happy to see their father again, but those who experienced the breakdown of their parents' relationship or the re-appearance of their father's alcohol problems found his return difficult.

Of course, our study only provides a snapshot of the bigger picture of the process of resettlement for imprisoned fathers and the adjustment of their families. Although it covered up to six months after

release, we do not know the longer-term development of the families. However, the first months after release are a particularly critical period for resettlement and a number of factors in this process may have a longer impact. It would be a challenging and unique undertaking to contact our families again and follow them up over a longer time period.

#### **4.2 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Despite the above-mentioned limitations of the study, various implications for policy and practice became apparent:

- High quality family relationships were a very strong and consistent predictor of successful resettlement outcomes for all family members. This suggests that both NOMS and family organisations need to consider the further actions that can be taken to maintain and strengthen these relationships. In particular, the quality of communication between the father and mother on key issues related to the father staying out of trouble and maintaining family relationships predicted successful readjustment. These findings highlight the importance of family communication, which can help to inform the development of family support services and family learning programmes. They also lend weight to the involvement of family members in prison-based programmes (e.g. Boswell, Poland, & Moseley, 2011).
- The data demonstrated the importance of frequent contact between imprisoned fathers and their families during imprisonment. This clearly warrants investing thought and resources into providing high quality visiting experiences. It is notable that phone calls were the most frequent method of family contact during imprisonment. These may provide a regularity and frequency of contact which is difficult to achieve through visits alone, especially where distance and cost of travel are deterrent factors. Prisons should therefore consider how to facilitate telephone communication most effectively.
- The analysis of prior expectations and experiences after release showed that a more accurate picture with regard to anticipated difficulties and resettlement outcomes was achieved by taking both parents' views into account. It would, therefore, be useful to include the partners' views in release and resettlement planning.

- As expected, employment, accommodation and financial problems were important difficulties in the resettlement process. However, they were not only related to a lack of material resources, but also to a lack of social resources such as quality of family relationships, good family communication, and family contact during imprisonment. This suggests that measures to improve resettlement and adjustment should not be applied in isolation, but address the whole pattern of individual needs of the prisoner and his family. Improved strategies in this direction should fully take into account NOMS' concept of multiple pathways out of crime.
- Our findings demonstrated the importance of informal support from the wider family and friends in the resettlement process. This suggests that prisons, probation and third sector agencies should be considering how to most effectively encourage such informal support in resettlement for prisoners and their families.
- We found that family orientated programmes were associated with positive resettlement outcomes when the quality of parents' relationship was taken into account. However, our study was only correlational in nature and so could not provide 'hard' evaluation data on programme effects. Therefore, we recommend further consideration of family orientated programmes and also their methodologically controlled evaluation. This would provide clearer knowledge on what measures are most effective for whom, when, under what conditions, and with regard to what specific outcomes. Family support measures could thus become an integral part of the evidence-based 'what works' movement.
- Our qualitative analyses revealed the fragility of the well-being of most of the children and young people interviewed in the study. These findings reinforce the need for children of prisoners to be recognised and cared for as vulnerable individuals in local and national policy and for organisations involved with children of prisoners to be sensitive to their vulnerabilities.
- Prior family relations were particularly important for successful coping with fathers' imprisonment and resettlement. This suggests the value of widening the view from corrective to preventive family-oriented interventions. Families should not only receive adequate support and guidance when the father is in prison, but also when there are early risks for offending, substance misuse and other deviant pathways in individual and family development. Such

approaches could be based on the evidence about key risk factors and effective family- and child-oriented prevention programmes (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Lösel & Bender, 2006; Lösel, 2011).

In addition to the above, we make the following technical recommendations:

- The difficulties in obtaining information about prisoners' parental status during recruitment highlighted the lack of systematic recording of information on prisoners' children by NOMS. This not only impedes research but has negative implications for potential service provision for imprisoned fathers and their families. Therefore, action on this problem should be taken to enable better services for prisoners, their families, and research in this field.
- The task of following up families post-release demonstrated the difficulties in tracking ex-prisoners and their families beyond the prison gates. This highlights the challenges faced by service providers such as Ormiston in targeting high-risk families who could benefit from support during the difficult period of resettlement. Although we are aware of data protection issues, we suggest to investigate how prison and probation data files should contain information which best serves the families' needs after release. Such an improvement would be in accordance with NOMS' mission of effective end-to-end offender management.

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## Appendix A

### Advisory Group Members

| Memeber                              | Organisation  | Title   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Prof Gwyneth Boswell                 | Boswell Research Fellows & Visiting Professor, School of Allied Health Professions, University of East Anglia | Director                                      |
| Dr Adrian Grounds                    | Institue of Criminology, University of Cambridge  | Honorary Research Fellow                      |
| Veronica Hollis                      | Analytical Services, Ministry of Justice  | Senior Research Officer                       |
| Miriam Light                         | Analytical Services, Ministry of Justice  | Senior Research Officer                       |
| Giles McCathie                       | East of England Public Sector Prisons   | Lead Psychologist & Reducing Reoffending Lead |
| Richard Nicholls<br>(Advisory Chair) | Clinks  | Programme Manager                             |
| Sarah Salmon                         | Action for Prisoners' Families  | Assistant Director                            |



## Appendix B: Risk Management Strategy

Procedure for tracking research staff while visiting participants:

1. These procedures should be used in conjunction with organisational policies on:
  - Health and Safety
  - Safety in professional practice (i.e., identifying and managing risks in order to promote safe working procedures)
  - Managing challenging behaviour policy (dealing with service-users who are violent or aggressive towards employees or under the influence of alcohol or drugs)
2. The research team will keep an interview diary of scheduled visits. This will be updated after each visit, and will be available to all research staff. In addition, Naomi Young and Caroline Edwards (Institute of Criminology Administrators) will also have access to the interview diary.
3. Prior to visiting participants, the research team will communicate with Ormiston and prison staff to identify any potential risks.
4. The research team will arrange a “buddy” in advance who will act as the contact person during visits. The names of participants, as well as details of the appointments (i.e., date, time, location) will be forwarded to the “buddy” prior to the interviews.
5. Interviewers will telephone the “buddy” upon arrival to the interview location.
6. Interviewers will telephone the “buddy” after the interview(s) has been completed and they have left the location of the interview. If the interview is delayed, the interviewer will send a text message to notify the “buddy” of this.
7. Should the interviewers feel unsafe, either on arrival at the locations or at any point during an interview, they will not put themselves at risk and will leave the premises.
8. In the unlikely event that the interviewers need to raise the alarm during a visit, she will telephone the “buddy” and state, *“The information is in the orange book.”* This will alert the contact person to telephone the police immediately and notify the Project Managers.
9. Should the interviewers fail to make contact with their “buddy” after completing the interview(s) and/or do not return at the scheduled time, the “buddy” will telephone the interviewers after 15 minutes. If contact with the interviewers cannot be made, this will alert the contact person to notify the Project Managers.

## Appendix C

### Interviewer Introduction Sheet for Parents

- Introduce yourself
- Give **brief recap of research** (i.e., conducting research about Dads in prison and their families)
- **Interview will last about 1 hour** (first part = interview (approx 45mins), second part = self-completion questionnaire (approx 15mins)). Mainly the interview will just be a normal conversation. There are no right or wrong answers. I will be taking notes during the interview.
- There may be some **sensitive questions**. I do not want to make you feel uncomfortable, so please let me know if you feel this way at any time.
- The information you give will be **kept confidential** and will be stored securely. Your name will not be written anywhere on your interview documents, and you will not be identified individually.
- This research is **independent from the Prison Service**. We will not tell the Prison Service, your family, or anyone else about what you say. However, if you tell us something that raises **serious concerns** about the present or future safety of yourself, your family or anyone else, we have an obligation to disclose this information appropriately.
- We kindly ask you not to discuss your interview with your family or anyone else. We are interested in *your* views and experiences, and if you talk to other people you may be influenced by their views and experiences. You can certainly talk to others about your interview after you have finished taking part.
- After this interview, we would like to come and see you again when you/your partner is in the community. Therefore, it is important that the research team **stay in touch with you/your family**.
- Your family will receive **shopping vouchers** on completion of Time 1 and Time 2 interviews in appreciation of their time.
- Any questions or concerns?