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In this month’s newsletter, the Taskforce is spotlighting the issues associated with mothers and their children. This subject is extremely important given the ever-increasing rate of incarceration of women and the ensuing negative impacts on their children. Nowhere are gender-based challenges most conspicuous for women, and yet their children are often referred to as the ‘forgotten’ or ‘invisible’. Women are a vulnerable group within the criminal justice system and their dependent children become the unintended victims of the criminal justice system, as the majority of criminalized women with children are single parents. In contrast, data from the USA shows that 90% of the children of incarcerated fathers live with their mothers, in contrast to the children of incarcerated mothers, the majority of whom are placed in the care of the state (i.e., foster homes). Most disconcerting is the fact that these children can carry long-lasting impacts with them into adulthood. Research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) reveal that detrimental childhood experiences, that include parental separation and parental incarceration, have been linked to toxic stress, poorer health, mental health problems, and poorer outcomes in education and future employment¹. Various studies have found that children of inmates are five to six times more likely to be incarcerated themselves than their peers with no incarcerated parents and that this rate increases when the parent is the mother. A study by the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents found that 33% of the incarcerated women had a parent, who had been incarcerated, approximately 80% had a member in their immediate family who had been incarcerated, and 59% had multiple family members who had been incarcerated². Given the long-term impacts associated with parental incarceration, community-based sentencing approaches should be considered first and foremost in sentencing. There is also a fundamental responsibility to ensure that the environment for both the mother and children are conducive to a child’s development, and supports if not improves, their relationship with their mother. Unfortunately, the standard of care and consideration of children indirectly implicated in the criminal justice system through their parent, varies from country to country which is why we believe this issue is so important. The Select Panel for the Promotion of Child Health stated that “children are one third of our population and all of our future”. The Taskforce strongly agrees with this statement, and given the significant


“Children are one third of our population and all of our future.”
— Select Panel for the Promotion of Child Health, 1981
impacts on children of incarcerated mothers, it is essential that criminal justice systems consider community-based sanctions along the full spectrum of the criminal justice system. Shawn Bayes of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver wrote a compelling article entitled “A Snowball’s Chance: Children of Offenders and Canadian Social Policy” which underscored the social invisibility of these children “within the broader grouping of the issues of poverty, addiction, family problems, and neighborhoods of lower socio-economic indicators”iii. We need to shine a stronger light on the issues affecting children of incarcerated mothers so that they are no longer invisible and forgotten.

In this month’s newsletter, Lucy Baldwin, a Senior Lecturer in Community and Criminal Justice at De Montfort University, examines the long-term impacts of maternal imprisonment on maternal identity. We have also highlighted an encouraging pilot program being offered by the Oregon Department of Corrections entitled “Parenting Inside Out-Phase”. In addition, we have included other various articles, research and upcoming events that we hope you will find both interesting and informative. We hope you enjoy this newsletter!


THE PERSISTING PAINS OF MATERNAL IMPRISONMENT

Dr Lucy Baldwin FHEA FRSA
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The United Kingdom (UK) ‘locks up’ more people than any other country in the Western world (apart from the USA), women make up approximately 5% of the overall UK prison population and the majority of imprisoned women are mothers. Translated figures mean that in the UK 12,000 mothers are separated from 18,000 children annually.

Despite international guidance from the Bangkok Rules and a recent UK Based Joint Human Rights Committee Inquiry into Maternal sentencing and the Rights of the Child (to which the author gave evidence), pregnant mothers, mothers of children under two and mothers with dependent children, are regularly sentenced to imprisonment in the UK. This continues despite over thirty years of evidence from academia, practice and policy makers demonstrating that prison rarely works effectively for women, and in fact often does more harm than good (Corston 2007). Tragically, in the last two years alone 2 babies have died in prison when their mothers have given birth in their cells, and another baby died on the way to hospital. This is not acceptable and although reviews have been undertaken and another is underway- this risk will only be removed if we cease to send pregnant women to prison at all. There are alternatives.

Despite most female offending being nonviolent and less serious in nature women are routinely remanded to prison and sentenced to imprisonment for short terms of imprisonment. Analysis of the impact of these short sentences reveals that even from a sentence of a few short weeks, the damage to mothers and their children is immediate, but significantly the harm and the trauma caused to mothers and their children endures. Please see Short but Not Sweet (SBNS) – report undertaken by the author in 2017.

“Everything changed in those few short weeks...we will never be the same” (Michelle)

A ‘few short weeks’ was long enough for mothers to lose their homes, for their children to be taken into care, to lose jobs and support networks- yet often not long enough to address relevant root causes of any offending or to set in motion post release support. The authors research, which includes SBNS and her Doctoral research, echoes and adds to previous research which clearly details the often intergenerational harm caused by unnecessary and inappropriate prison sentences for women. Most
women in prison in the UK have experienced poverty, trauma and abuse and are battling mental health issues. Many mothers in the authors research were struggling with addiction and trauma, trauma that was most often rooted in and triggered by abusive experiences - in both childhood and adulthood. There is much understanding about women’s ‘pathways’ into crime, and yet still the missed opportunities to support women pre-prison continue.

Women, particularly mothers are often criminalised and imprisoned for what basically amounts to poverty and trauma. Debbie who stole nappies and formula when her welfare payments were stopped unexpectedly states.

"I needed what I took, I know it’s wrong but what do you do when you don’t have formula and nappies and you have no money…I only ever stole what I needed. Sometimes I think how do you survive with addictions and depression and anxiety, not knowing how you will heat the house or put the electric on" (Debbie, Baldwin and Epstein 2017:41)

For many imprisoned mothers guilt became a life threatening emotion, Mothers described ‘only Just’ getting through their incarceration and for most of the mothers their suicidal thoughts were often related to their ‘lost’ motherhood. Beth stated, ‘I just didn’t want to be here anymore, I felt like I’d lost her [her baby] forever, if I wasn’t a mother anymore what was the point of me?’. Several Mothers made explicit reference to suicide:

“I must admit I did have very negative thoughts, I’m ashamed to admit it crossed my mind to take my life… obviously I didn’t!” (Mavis; Baldwin 21;161)

“...[in my cell] was when I missed my kids the most and it was always then I would cut up - I never felt safe on my own or in my own head…” (Maggie, Baldwin 21:200)

Kady felt that it was only the fact than an officer ‘was kind’ to her and ‘made time’ to support her as a newly pregnant mum that she ‘got through that first week’ and if not for that officer, Kady might have taken her life (Baldwin 21;161).

My doctoral research Doctoral research examined the long-term impact of maternal imprisonment on maternal identity and maternal role, revealing the persisting pains and enduring trauma the mothers experienced due to maternal separation. Incarcerated motherhood rendered mothers subject to long lasting feelings of failure. Mothers described feeling ‘forever’ judged and ‘stigmatised’, and mothers’ several decades post release described symptoms that can only be ascribed to PTSD. Many mothers experienced flashbacks and nightmares related either to their arrest, to their court appearance or to the separation from their children.

“The effects of that place haunt me, the physical scars on my arms only remind me of the pain and heartache I felt when I was in there. Just not being with my kids, man... but worse for me are the mental scars that no one sees, everyone thinks I’m over it... no one knows, but I’m wrecked really. I still have nightmares from that place you know[...]...nothing will take that away.” (Dee, Baldwin 21: 276).

Mothers described how they continued to struggle with a perception of themselves as ‘failed’ mothers, feeling as though they must forever serve ‘penance’, not for their ‘crimes'
but for ‘failing their children’. Mothers and grandmothers in the studies carried their ‘shame’ and blame’ with them through decades and this impacted on how they were able to mother their children. Some mothers felt so ‘worthless’ as mothers that they felt their children were ‘better off’ without them and they absented themselves from their children’s lives. Which in turn had devastating consequences on their children’s and grandchildren’s lives. My research found that in relation to mothers imprisonment and its impact, support, compassion and understanding was lacking. This left mothers vulnerable not only to failed rehabilitation and desistance, but to decades of enduring harm. Tragically not all of the mothers in my research were able to cope with the impact of their imprisonment and I later found out that Beth, who had been imprisoned for shoplifting when her baby was three month old, took her life just before her 21st birthday. She simply didn’t have the strength (or support) to be able to cope with the slow return of her daughter—whom she felt no longer “knew” her and who she had ‘let down’. Beth had been a young mum who had been badly let down by multiple agencies before prison and who had been imprisoned instead of listened to, separated from her child instead of supported. It was too much. Her child will grow up motherless - because Beth was imprisoned for shoplifting. We must do better. We owe it to Beth.

**PARENTING INSIDE OUT - GETTING A HEAD START**

Kelly Hodney  Operation & Policy Analyst  Correctional Services Division  Oregon Department of Corrections

Christine Popoff  Assistant Superintendent of Correctional Rehabilitation  Coffee Creek Correctional Facility

What can prisons do to give incarcerated mothers and their infants and toddlers a solid head start before mom releases?

**Evidence-Based Programming**

The Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) incarcerates approximately 12,400 adults in 14 prisons across the state. It employs 4,700 people with a biennial budget of $2 billion. ODOC enrolled in the Amend Program at University of California San Francisco and developed the "Oregon Way." The goal of the Oregon Way is to reduce the use of segregation and improve employee health and wellness by transforming prison environments to be more normal and humane. The Oregon Department of Corrections has long been invested in providing evidence-based, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed programming and services to its incarcerated men and women. Unlike our male population, women’s pathways to (or away from) crime are primarily through relationships. After conducting a gap analysis, ODOC moved from use of the gender-neutral Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) to the gender-responsive Women’s Risk Needs Assessment tool (WRNA) at its women’s institution, and every one of the cognitive programs were updated to reflect the latest research in evidence-based programming related to gender and cultural responsiveness.

**Parenting**

ODOC is also piloting the Parenting Inside Out-Phase II® (PIO2) program through a federal grant. The first phase of Parenting Inside Out® (PIO) is an evidence-based parent management training developed for criminal justice-involved parents. The prison version is specifically designed for adults in custody (AIC) parenting from prison and focuses on building skills for solving problems related to day-to-day life. Enrollment of adults in custody with open child welfare cases is prioritized. The second phase builds on the skills and knowledge first developed during the initial parenting classes. The second phase provides support services to participant parents’ children and their caregivers; and, building upon the knowledge and skills developed during the initial phase of parenting classes, positively reconnects parents with their minor children before release through one-on-one coaching, skills building, and in-person and virtual visiting and visiting events.

“I got the opportunity to be a mother . . . I was afraid I would never get that.”

Denis Bello, former incarcerated mother and Early Head Start participant
In 2003, ODOC started its partnership with Washington County Community Action (WCCA) to open an Early Head Start (EHS) classroom on the grounds of Oregon’s only women’s prison – Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) in Wilsonville, Oregon. A first of its model in the nation, WCCA provides trained teachers to facilitate interactions that help incarcerated mothers bond with their children, learn parenting skills, and prepare for successful parenting after release from prison. Originally limited to the standard infant to three years of age, it was soon recognized that three-year-old children do not readily understand why they can no longer be cared for by their mother each week simply because they have “aged out” before their mother completed her sentence. In 2015, WCCA was approved as a “locally designed option” that expanded the program to include children up to five years of age. As part of the program, and in addition to classroom instruction and classroom care responsibilities, incarcerated mothers spend seven hours each week caring for their child in the classroom under the supervision and coaching of the Early Head Start teacher.

In addition to instruction and strengthening their parent-child attachment during incarceration, mothers in this program can serve as a representative on the WCCA Parent Policy Council. An elected group, each policy council is comprised of representatives from the various Head Start models as well as board members and community action organization staff. The incarcerated mother representing the CCCF EHS, escorted by a correctional officer in plain clothes, joins other parents from the community in monthly program planning and policy and decision making. To ensure all program participants benefit from this leadership opportunity and remain current on the issues, the representatives are alternated each month and the attending mother is responsible for reporting out to the other CCCF EHS participants. This experience improves the mothers’ community connection and well as their understanding of county government operations, politics, and budgeting.

Carmen Slothower, EHS Teacher at Coffee Creek, said, “I have seen first-hand, countless relationships between children and their mothers grow in the EHS program at Coffee Creek. The mothers learn strategies to support their child’s overall growth and development in the context of routines and a loving, nurturing relationship.”

In 2017, the Nurturing Healthy Attachments Project engaged in a “three-pronged enhancement of the Head Start curriculum” with a goal of building parenting skills for a “secure and healthy mother-child relationship.” During the course of the project, participants and staff reported evidence of “the mothers’ empathetic shift toward greater awareness of their child’s emotional needs, their child’s behavior as communication of those needs, their own triggered emotional response to their child’s behavior, and growing capacity to remain mindful of how they can remain emotionally available to their child’s needs, especially during high emotional states.”

These findings were echoed by a participant of the program released in December 2020. Denis Bello was 23 when she delivered Luna while incarcerated; and Ms. Bello and Luna started in the program at their earliest opportunity. During a recent telephone call, Ms. Bello reported she was doing well, had secured a part-time job, and was so grateful for EHS. “I got the opportunity to be a mother. When Luna was born, I was afraid I would never get that.”
Of course, COVID-19 had its impacts. In-person classroom activities were suspended and contact was limited to phone and video chats. So, when she released, it had been nine months since Denis had held Luna, and she was concerned what separation would do to their relationship.

EHS arranged a video call between Ms. Bello and a previous EHS participant who had already released. That call proved to be very helpful. They talked about managing expectations, preparing for the ups and downs of the relationship, the move from “excited to see you” to “what are you still doing here?” and everything in between. Denis also recalled something Carmen said to her when she was at one of her lowest points as an incarcerated mom and concerned about Luna making closer connections to other members of her family than to her: “It’s okay for other people to love your child too; that just makes her a very lucky little girl.” According to Ms. Bello, without her experiences at EHS, she would not have understood her child and how to meet her needs as she now does.

On March 13, 2021, Denis and Luna celebrated Luna’s third birthday with family, balloons, and lots of presents. But most importantly, they celebrated it together.

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**Parenting Inside Out (PIO)** was evaluated in a $2.1 million longitudinal randomized controlled preventive intervention trial (RCT) funded by the U.S. National Institute of Health and conducted by a research team based at the Oregon Social Learning Center. PIO has been reviewed by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and appears on its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) website. PIO is the only evidence-based parenting program for criminal justice-involved parents (i.e., for both genders), and it is the highest rated parenting program for criminal justice-involved parents listed on NREPP.

As a means toward enhancing its normalization and humanization efforts, in 2019, ODOC supported state legislation (House Bill 3146) that changed statutory references from “inmate” to “adult in custody.” The term “inmate” is no longer used by ODOC staff or within its facilities and is being removed from existing ODOC rules and policies through an incremental update process.

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**CONCORDAT ON WOMEN IN OR AT RISK OF CONTACT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

Stephen Pitts - Beyond Prisons Taskforce Member

In January 2021, the United Kingdom Government published a “Concordat on Women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System”.

The Concordat, which applies in England and Wales, had been promised in an earlier publication, the 2018 Female Offender Strategy. The Strategy built on previous reports including a landmark review by Baroness Jean Corston, which argued that too many low risk women were serving prison sentences. Together with other initiatives, (some of which, together with the Strategy, were referred to in the “Featured Jurisdiction” section of the June 2020 Newsletter) the Corston Review, Female Offender Strategy, and Concordat may be seen as a significant national level progression over time to improve responses to women in or at risk of contact with the Criminal Justice System.

The Strategy identified the importance of effective partnerships in addressing the multiple and complex needs of women with whom we work, noting differences in the risks and needs of women and men and that women tend to be lower risk of serious harm than men and have greater needs in

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Corston Review (2007)

terms of substance misuse, mental health and past experiences of sexual and domestic abuse. They are also more likely to be the sole carer of dependent children.

The Concordat is important for its agreement to bring together a wide range of Government departments, setting out how they should work together centrally and with partners locally to identify and respond to the needs of women. Signatories include the Ministry of Justice, Prison and Probation Services, courts services, departments for education, work and pensions, health and social care, the Treasury, Home Office, and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Concordat begins by setting out a formal commitment between the signatories indicating: “We will strive to make sure that all relevant public services and wider delivery partners, including the voluntary sector, work together to support women. We will do the things in our power – according to each organisation’s appropriate remit and scope – to promote the delivery of the strategic priorities of the Female Offender Strategy, which should result in:

- fewer women coming into the criminal justice system and reoffending;
- fewer women in custody (especially on short-term sentences) and a greater proportion of women managed in the community successfully; and
- better conditions for those who are in custody."

The Concordat is a substantial document that includes much practical advice on implementation including:

- setting up partnerships involving collaborative planning based on identified needs
- development of structures that embed partnership work and involve voluntary sector organisations
- and improved practice through multi-discipline teams.

For further information you can access the following link:

**RESEARCH**


GLOBAL PRISON TRENDS 2021 REPORT

IN THE NEWS

- Beyond Prison Taskforce – 7th edition of Justice Trends Magazine
- What It's Like to be Trapped in a Women’s Prison During a Pandemic
- Reproductive Justice for Women in Canadian Federal Prisons
- Understanding the needs and experiences of pregnant women and new mothers in contact with the criminal justice system in the community of England.
- France: Anti-torture Committee deplores conditions of detention, prison overcrowding and lack of psychiatric beds
- A mother’s pain: Former inmates help change MN law after speaking out about post-birth separations

RESOURCES

Understanding the needs and experiences of pregnant women and new mothers in contact with the criminal justice system in the community of England.

Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails: Reducing Barriers to Family Connections

EVENTS

APPA – 46th Annual Training Institute August 23rd to 25th, 2021
The Taskforce will be holding a workshop at the 46th Annual Training Institute. See the APPA website for more details! https://www.appa-net.org/institutes/2021-Boston/

5th World Congress on Probation and Parole in Ottawa, Canada has been re-scheduled to September 28th to October 1st, 2022.

The theme of the event will be “No One Left Behind: Building Community Capacity”.

The World Congress on Probation and Parole brings together experts, researchers and practitioners from around the world to promote and develop probation and community corrections through the sharing of practical and academic knowledge. See the call for papers here.
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international@pbc-clcc.gc.ca
or visit our new website:
https://icpa.org/taskforcewomen/