
PRINCIPLES OF ACTION FOR CHILDREN WITH A PARENT IN PRISON

Build a solid knowledge base

- 1. Gather data on the current situation of children with a parent in prison in Ireland** – anonymised data should be gathered to inform policy and service provision. This should include the number of children affected, as well as general demographics and geographical information.
- 2. Map services in Ireland available for children with a parent in prison** – a national map should be developed of the current services available, where they are and what gaps exist in service provision for this group of children.
- 3. Increase the current knowledge base on the issues of children with a parent in prison in Ireland** – opportunities should be identified to establish or promote research in all disciplines on children with a parent in prison.

Hear the voices of children with a parent in prison

- 4. Develop and effectively employ mechanisms to ensure that children with a parent in prison have their voices heard** - these mechanisms should insure that children are heard in policy, service provision and individual treatment. This should operate in relation to situations concerning a parent in prison, but also expanded to include situations where children have a parent within the criminal justice system. This includes arrest, the court process and care arrangements.

Recognise the holistic needs of children with a parent in prison in National Policy

5. **A clear statement outlining a commitment to State action supporting this group of children should be adopted.**
6. **Adopt a holistic approach to policy and service provision in order to address the needs and rights of children with a parent in prison.** Current commitments at policy and service levels in areas of Education, Health, Social Protection and Social Welfare should be examined to ensure the needs and particular circumstances of these children are recognised and included.
7. **Establish an inter-departmental working group led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to develop an inter-agency strategy to ensure better collaboration on the issue.**

Establish multi-agency partnerships at local level and national levels

8. **Promote the establishment of multi-agency partnerships at both local and national level which can coordinate service level approaches.**

Develop monitoring frameworks

9. **The state should formally recognise children with a parent in prison as a priority for monitoring these children's needs and outcomes in accordance with basic children's rights protections in Ireland.**

Raise awareness of the issue

10. **Provide children with a parent in prison with clear information regarding their rights and the services and supports available to them.**
11. **Develop and disseminate information and educational resources to challenge the stigma commonly associated with having a parent in prison – this information should enhance understanding in sectors.**