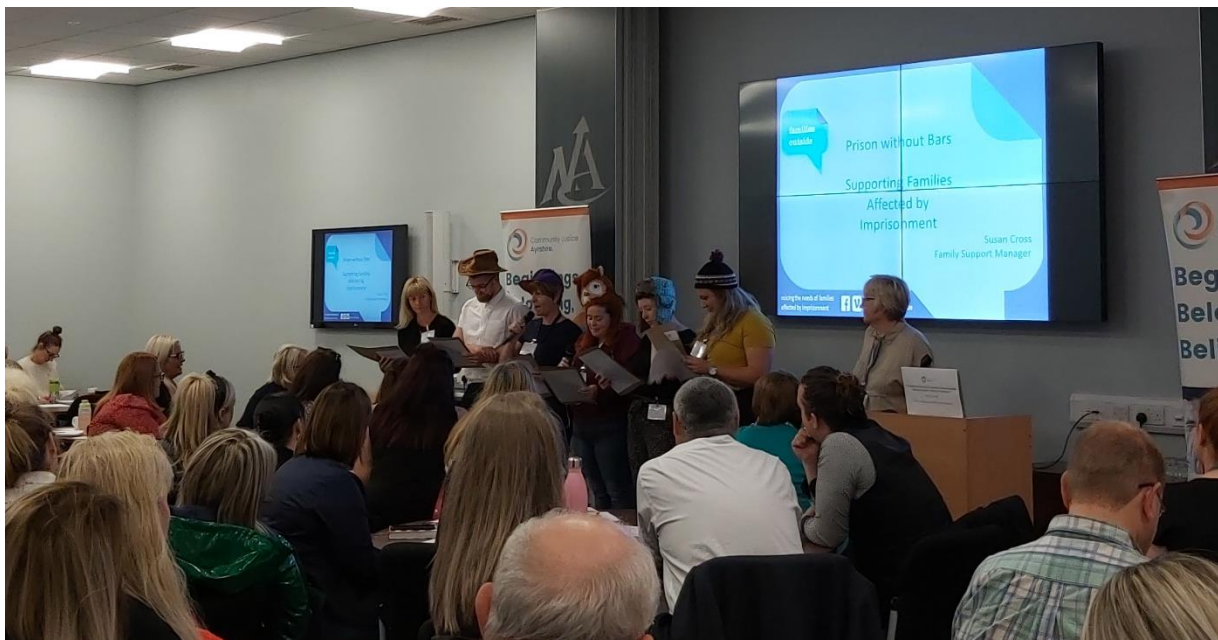


## **“Not My Crime - Still My Sentence” Evaluation Report Community Justice Ayrshire Conference: Friday 30 August 2019**



### **Background**

The negative effects of imprisonment on children and families are wide ranging and permeate every aspect of family life. Consequences of an individual’s imprisonment include high financial, emotional and social costs which prisoners’ family members are often forced to pay. Such costs have been termed ‘invisible punishment’, as they often leave prisoners’ families feeling as if they have been penalised for crimes they have not committed. In fact, when family members have been given the chance to talk about their experience, they often describe it in terms of ‘doing time’ with the prisoner or serving parallel sentences of ‘imprisonment on the outside’.

The ‘Not My Crime – Still My Sentence’ conference was organised following discussions at the Community Justice Ayrshire ‘Children and Families Affected by Justice’ thematic group. This group seeks to work towards reducing the impact of parental or familial imprisonment on children and young people, and to reduce the likelihood of young people themselves becoming involved in the justice system.

The group is Pan-Ayrshire and multi-disciplinary in composition, and it was social work managers within the group who highlighted that there may be a need to raise awareness with social workers (and others who work with children and young people) about the research which shows that in most cases it is beneficial for a child to retain contact when a parent is in prison. Not only that, but children also have a right to do so if they wish.

## 'Not My Crime – Still My Sentence'

The planning group were keen to:

- Highlight the current research base
- Cover some of the practical support available to help the estimated 27,000 children across Scotland and their families cope when a loved one is in prison
- Give delegates the chance to look at some of the approaches and initiatives in place locally to help support family relationships when a parent or family member is in prison
- Raise awareness of the stigma that families face, and the financial challenges imprisonment can bring
- Provide an overview of the statutory context of social work and prisons, and some of the challenges this can bring

Hosted by Councillor Anthea Dickson, Chair of Community Justice Ayrshire, inputs were provided on the day by a range of speakers:



### **"Imagine: Making rights real when a family member goes to prison"**

*Professor Nancy Loucks OBE, Chief Executive, Families Outside*



### **"Families Outside - responding to the needs of families affected by imprisonment"**

*Susan Cross, Family Support Manager, Families Outside*



### **"Families, Imprisonment and Social Justice: exploring the wider impact of punishment"**

*Dr Cara Jardine, Teaching Associate, University of Strathclyde*



### **"Justice Social Work Services: A whistle stop tour of the statutory process"**

*Jackie Hamilton, Snr Manager Children and Justice Services, South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership*



### **"Family Are Not Just on the Outside: Young people's experiences of inter- and intra-prison family relationships"**

*Kirsty Deacon, PhD Student, University of Glasgow*



### "Prison Visitors Centres Overview"

*Kerry Knox, Head of Service, Prison Visitors Centres, Families Outside*



### "A Glimpse into HMP Kilmarnock Family & Friends Hub"

*Centrestage*



### "Play in Prison - Placing families at the centre"

*Alex McConnell, Play and Early Intervention Development Officer, Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Council*



### "Connection, collaboration and creativity"

*Rosie Reid, Lead Artist (KIN) and Development Coordinator and Graeme McKerracher, Assistant Director, Vox Liminis*

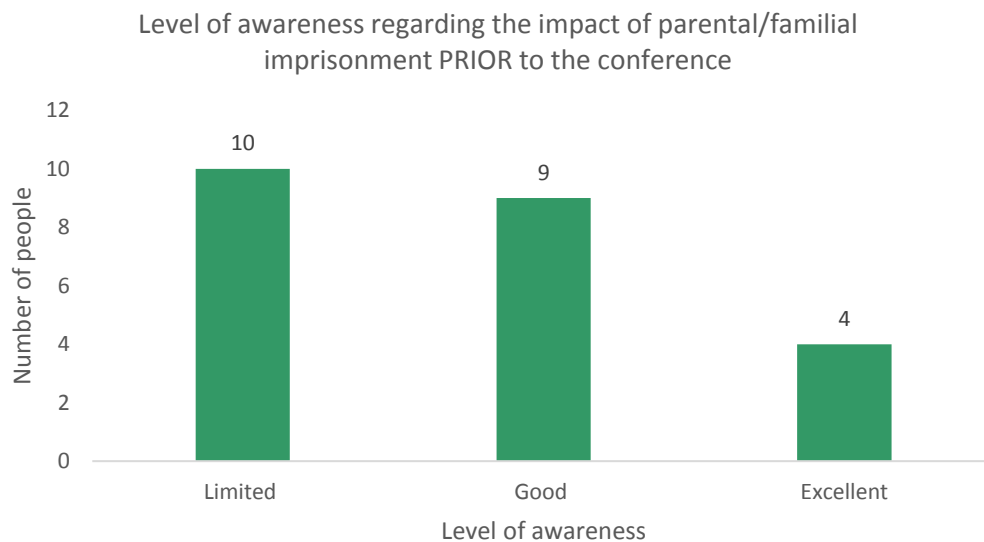
A marketplace provided delegates with a variety of information, resources and interactive learning materials from a range of different organisations.



## Event Feedback

Over 90 people attended the conference. An evaluation form was circulated via SurveyMonkey after the conference. Some key points from the feedback are as follows:

### **1. What was your level of awareness regarding the impact of parental/familial imprisonment prior to the conference?**



### **2. What did you hope to achieve from the conference?**

*“More in depth knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of other agencies and the services offered to families affected by imprisonment”*

*“A better understanding of the process and procedures for families visiting their family members in prison”*

*“To find out more information on how to support families within the prison system”*

*“I was looking forward to hearing up to date research and particularly about families/siblings affected by young person’s imprisonment in Polmont”*

*“Engage in discussion and learn about agencies”*

*“More awareness of how children are impacted and what support services are available for young people and families”*

*“Enhanced insight into impact on children, and understanding of therapeutic interventions identified to alleviate stress, and build emotional resilience”*

### 3. Do you feel this has been delivered? Please explain your reasons

*"Yes, reminded us that not all children present in the same way and awareness of practical issues regarding a parent being in prison"*

*"Partially - I felt the element of sibling impact was not fully explored but appreciate the name of the conference was parental imprisonment"*

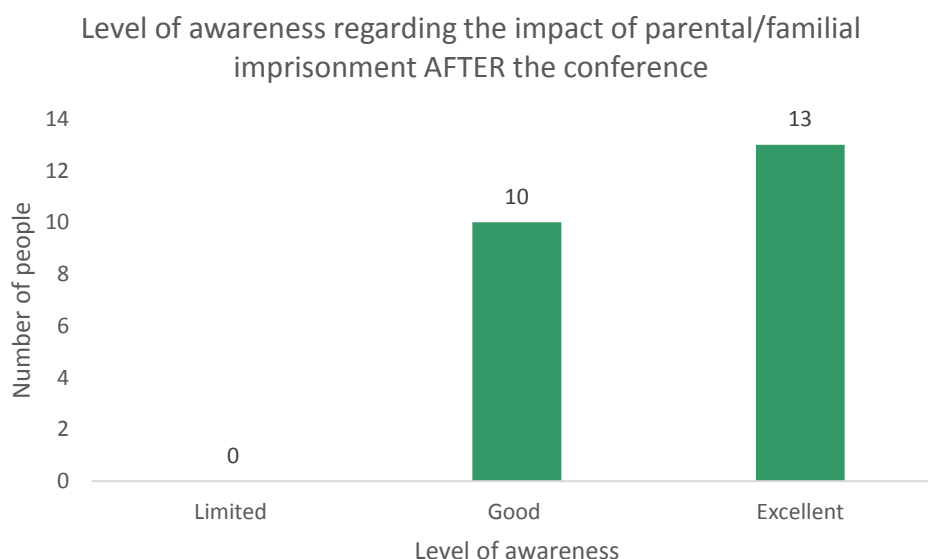
*"To some degree. I think it would have been beneficial to hear from people who have experienced this as children"*

*" Yes, however I would have liked more discussion re: role of statutory services in this i.e.. via C&F processes"*

*"No - I don't feel I was able to take anything away that will actually improve my interactions with young people"*

*"Yes - I thought the information was incredibly detailed and felt that the input from researchers was invaluable"*

### 4. After attending the conference, how would you now rate your awareness of the impact of parental/familial imprisonment?



**5. After listening to all the speakers at the event, please state which presentation stood out the most and the reasons why?**

*"I felt all presentations were equally good as they showed the diverse range of services available. This gives families the opportunity to work with a range of services or one specific to meet their needs and requirements"*

*"Kirsty Deacon - for reasons stated above. I felt that she was the only speaker that explored sibling relationships in Polmont and the impact for parents for their children are imprisoned"*

*"Alex McConnell's team is a great support to children and families providing valuable support to all involved to make a prison visit less traumatising. Vox Liminis provided a great support to the young people who had a relative in prison and Jack spoke very highly of them as every one of them became a 'brother, sister or cousin', which was very touching and great praise for Vox Liminis"*

*"Dr Cara Jardine, because it was relevant to my role and needs. Also, Susan Cross because the "Hats" exercise brought the subject to life for the different age groups"*

*"I enjoyed Cara's input. She spoke passionately, and I felt it informed my practice in a way that I found really engaging"*

*"Families, Imprisonment and Social Justice stood out as I knew that statistically the poorest people were most likely to go to prison, but it hadn't occurred to me all of the extra costs that are involved for the prisoner and their family. Also, the Prison Visitor's Centre Overview, as I had no idea that this existed, and I feel that it goes a long way towards trauma informed practice when working with the families of the prisoners"*

*"Play in Prison; Alex McConnell's presentation was vibrant; energetic and offered a good insight into early intervention particularly when she was discussing attachments between fathers and their children"*

*"Nancy Loucks: Hard hitting and passionate"*

**6. What were the key messages you could take away from the conference?**

*"The importance of children's views regarding having contact with a parent who is imprisoned"*

*"That there is help and support out there, No one needs to or should be doing this "sentence" alone"*

*"That the children's voices must always be heard, never to be the forgotten ones in the judicial system".*

*“That there are others in Scotland who would like to reform the way justice is delivered and reduce the impacts of imprisonment on family members”*

*“Will look to access support from KIN in future, they seem to have good provision for young people”*

*“How traumatic it must be for a young person to have a relative in prison and the difficulties they go through when going to visit”*

*“All organisations operating in the community justice arena have a responsibility for supporting families affected by imprisonment. I was amazed at how little information is captured to assist in the support of a very marginalised group”*

*“A child having a family member in prison is more common than one whose parents are divorced.*

*There is a lot of support for families, but many don't access it as they don't want to talk about it.*

*Scotland are not fulfilling all the rights that prisoners and their families have, including ones from the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and also the Council of Europe”*

*“Practical and financial issues when a parent is in prison”*

*“The need for community hubs and cafes for families and the impact they have. Also the impact of a financial burden on families of those in prison”*

## **7. How do you believe you can utilise this in your current organisation?**

*“Ensure every member of the family is included”*

*“Discussion point for team meetings and consideration when writing reports re: impact on children and making the Court and other agencies aware”*

*“Sharing my experience gained at the event. Sign post families and staff to relevant organisations”*

*“I will continue to raise the importance of recognising and reflecting the impact on children in respect of CJSWR and not for the children to merely be referenced in the composition of the family”*

*“Knowledge and understating of the complexities. I found understanding the financial impact on the families outside helpful. this is where I think this may support my work, when working with early years and families in the community I believe I already had a good understanding of the impact on children but not so much the impact of the practicalities”*

*“I have set up a meeting with the Pastoral Care department in my school in order to better equip ourselves with outside agencies to turn to”*

*“As a Community Practitioner I work with vulnerable parents, I now feel I have more knowledge on how a parent and child might feel if a loved one goes to prison and the difficulties, they would have in going to visit. I have already contacted Alex McConnell to see about arranging a prison visit”*

*"I have already made contact with other services present on the day about linking up to deliver a better service in my area and potentially support their service"*

**8. Please provide any further feedback regarding the conference (e.g. speakers, layout, what was missing etc.)**

*"The Sheriffs would benefit from the conference"*

*"The conference was superb - my only suggestion would be hearing directly from more children who have been involved with the prison system through family members and the impact in a positive and negative light in highlighting services which built the most resilience and hope in them"*

*"It would have been good to hear from a prison officer"*

*"Really well organised. More time with the young person who was so amazing for speaking up!"*

*"Could have benefited from some workshops/activities to break up the day – a lot of presentations"*

*"I felt this was a really important day and highlighted a group of young people who have the potential to go unnoticed due to stigma and lack of information. I found a lot of the speakers moving and left enthusiastic about the justice sector in Ayrshire and the work people are doing to support families"*

*"Fantastic conference. Well worth the full day out my diary"*

Kirsty Baker  
Planning and Performance Officer  
Community Justice Ayrshire  
October 2019