

SUPPORTING CHILDREN IMPACTED BY FAMILIAL IMPRISONMENT – MARCH 2024

Hello and welcome to a new newsletter from **Breaking Barriers**. Our aim is to land in your inbox once a term to update you on what we are doing and what might be happening for children in your organisation, school or community who have a family member in prison. Feel free to share across your networks.

Meet Dylan...

In the last year we have co-produced a new story and workbook about having a family member in prison with some of the children we work with.

Dylan's Story is all about Dylan's experiences when his dad went to prison.

We were delighted to officially launch Dylan's Story at Norwich Prison on 8th December and were thrilled to be joined by some of the children who participated, police officers with a community interest, the Norfolk libraries service and representatives from HMPPS.

Dylan tells of the mix of emotions he felt when his dad was arrested, when he was sentenced, and when Dylan was preparing to visit his dad for the first time.

Dylan's story is really the story of the myriad children and young people we support across the Eastern region.

Did you know that there are about 312,000 children with a parent currently in prison? That's roughly equivalent to one in every classroom.

Focus on Feelings – Loss

When a child loses someone they love to prison, they can experience a deep sense of loss, especially if there is no contact, or there was no warning/preparation before it happened. The loss can leave children feeling sad, bereft, unable to concentrate, feeling overwhelmed and with unanswered questions. Imprisonment can feel like a living bereavement.

Resources

Consider stocking books in your setting that are about loss and grief in an open ended way, rather than just about death. The Paper Dolls by Julia Donaldson is a great example.



You can watch the animation here:
<https://www.ormiston.org/dylans-story/>



Useful points of contact

Prisoner Families Helpline

0808 8082003

Provides advice and information on all aspects of the justice system, from what happens when a loved one is arrested, to visiting a prison, to preparing for release.

Bedfordshire

Breaking Barriers Bedfordshire works across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. The senior practitioners are Holly Lovatt-Brown and Anna Cosford.

“We have both worked with children and families throughout our careers and are thoroughly enjoying working for Ormiston Families. We feel it is a privilege to work with families affected by imprisonment and to support them to feel less isolated, more empowered and strengthened to keep moving during such challenging times.”

Cambridgeshire

“Hi my name is Debbie, I have worked at Ormiston Families for 30 years and been involved in many projects working with children, young people and families, which include, young carers, teenage parents, siblings groups and sensory toy library to name just a few. I have been a member of the Breaking Barriers team for 3 years and cover Cambs area, which consists of Cambridge, Peterborough, Huntingdon and Fenland.”

Debbie, along with Anna (Beds area) recently presented a webinar at a Child Protection Information Network meeting, that was open to all DSLs in schools and colleges across the county. Information was given about the impact on children of having a family member in prison and what we offer in terms of support to them and schools. The webinar was a great success and well over 100 DSL’s attended.

Essex

We are Sangita Mitra and Sheree Tralau, the senior practitioners for Breaking Barriers Essex and we joined the team in January 2024.

In Essex, our priority is continuing to deliver the Breaking Barriers service to the children and young people on our waiting list, and we also look forward to connecting with you as our partners in the near future.

We have an established good working relationship with our colleagues at HMP Chelmsford who facilitate family visits in the prisons. Having these positive links with our colleagues and working collaboratively ensures we are always up to date with practice and well equipped to support children and families who have not experienced visiting someone in prison before.

We can support others by dispelling any negative myths that may act as barriers to maintaining contact or engagement with the person in prison.

Breaking Barriers is a welcoming and supportive team, and we are excited to continue the good work that has been established in our county.

“My passion for making a positive difference to the lives of children affected by elements of the criminal justice system is what initially attracted me to this unique service delivered by Ormiston Families. In the short time with the organisation, I feel privileged to be in a position where I can offer support to children struggling to cope with the loss of family member to prison” - Sangita.

Norfolk

As well as working directly with children, families, schools and other partners, we also talk about what we do, and why we do it – raising awareness of the challenges that children we support are facing. Claire from Norfolk recently spoke to future social workers and education students at the University of Suffolk; and delivered training to a group of LINK Mental Health Champions in Norfolk.

We have also been involved in a survey about the Serious Violence Duty and what we feel that looks like for the families we work with.

“Hi, my name is Jay Williams and I have recently joined Ormiston Families as a senior practitioner in Norfolk.

I’ve worked with young people and families in a supportive capacity for many years and believe all children regardless of their experiences or circumstances should have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential to move through life. I often use art and play therapeutically in support sessions to help them understand difficult subjects and explore their feelings, recognise strengths and build resilience. I feel privileged to work for such a caring and committed organisation.”

Suffolk

“Hi, I’m Grace and I’m the Breaking Barriers Senior Practitioner in Suffolk.

My passion for helping others started at a young age and I completed a Law Degree at University.

I soon realised helping families, children and young people was more rewarding and offering practical help and supporting healthy relationships was where my strength lay.

I’m committed to continuing to deliver the Breaking Barriers service across Suffolk and look forward to working with you as a partner soon.”

Time Together

Following our pilot parent group last year, we are pleased to announce we are relaunching Time Together in April. The aim is to create a safe online space for parents of children impacted by imprisonment chat to practitioners and other parents/carers.

For more details contact

**holly.lovatt-
brown@ormistonfamilies.org.uk**

The Breaking Barriers team was thrilled to win the Early Intervention Award at the Children and Young People Now awards in November.



In the period Apr-Dec 2023, Breaking Barriers supported 145 children impacted by someone they care about going to prison and we provided 1721 sessions across the East of England.

93% of the children supported showed an improvement in their emotional wellbeing. 97% felt they have a better understanding of prison. 98% felt it made a positive difference to their lives.

The majority of our referrals come from schools, but referrals can be made by anyone. If you would like to know more about making a referral please contact us at:

bbreferrals@ormistonfamilies.org.uk