

Confused

pss*

Don't worry

A book for children
with a close family
member in prison

Angry

Upset

Strong Happy Positive Proud



The PSS Prisoners' Families team are there to give support and advice to you when a close family member is in prison. A family worker from PSS will work with you to help you to understand what is happening and feel happier.



The other children and teenagers we work with might have had similar experiences and felt similar feelings to you. Family workers have lots of advice to give about ways to cope, to look after yourself and to feel more positive about life when a family member is in prison. We had a chat with some children aged between six and sixteen with a parent in prison. They told us what they had been through. **Evie** (aged 16), **Cameron** (aged 13), **Jada** (aged 6) and **Zainen** (aged 8) told us about every stage of their parent going into prison, how they found it and their advice to other people in that situation.



This book is split into different sections, going through every part of your parent or close family member going into prison. There might be stuff you can relate to in each section. You can then get tips in the 'How can Prisoners' Families Support me?' box at the end of each section. This tells you about how your family worker can support you and things you can do yourself or with your family to manage your emotions.

Evie, aged 16; Cameron, aged 13; Jada, aged 6; and Zainen, aged 8 share how they felt when they found out, when their parent was arrested, how they cope without their parent and what it's like to visit someone in prison. This might give you ideas about the things to expect, the natural worries you might have and the ways you can cope and get support that suits you.

If you live in Merseyside and you need some support when your parent or close family member is in prison, or after they've been released from prison you can call someone in the Prisoners' Families team on: **0151 706 6701**.

If you don't live in Merseyside you can still contact us for advice and we can do our best to find a service to support you where you live. Or, you can call the Offenders Families National Helpline who support families all over the UK on: **0808 808 2003**.

A big thanks to Evie, Cameron, Jada and Zainen and the friends they have met at PSS Prisoners' Families for sharing their advice.

The PSS Prisoners' Families team

Meet Evie, Cameron, Jada and Zainen who all know what it's like to have a parent or close family member in prison...



I'm Evie, I'm sixteen and I like watching stuff on Netflix with my mates and hanging around with them. I like watching normal telly too, Love Island's the best. Nan's not so keen on it though, I don't think I'd put her through watching it, 'too rude', she reckons! I live with her and my grandad and my mum now - since my dad went into prison, over a year ago. I miss how funny he is, he was the life and soul; we had so many good times and I miss seeing my little brother, too. We've got a different mum and his mum won't have anything to do with our side of the family now. We used to go to the cinema with my dad too so now I go with the girls from school instead; it kind of reminds me of good times in a way, I suppose! I'm not sure what I want to do in the future, maybe move away somewhere for uni, we'll see how things go. I hope I get the grades. I could even move somewhere closer to dad, he's down South now, miles away! I haven't been able to see him much.



My dad worked in the prisons, a guard there and he was caught bringing drugs in and selling them. I can't believe he'd do something like that, it just seems so

Evie*

Aged sixteen

risky. I think that's why his sentence is so long - because he should have known better. He says he's not sure why he did it. I guess for money but it's no excuse, really. He is proper sorry, though, and he's still a nice person. I don't hold grudges, he's my dad and nothing's going to change that so I just think, what's the point?



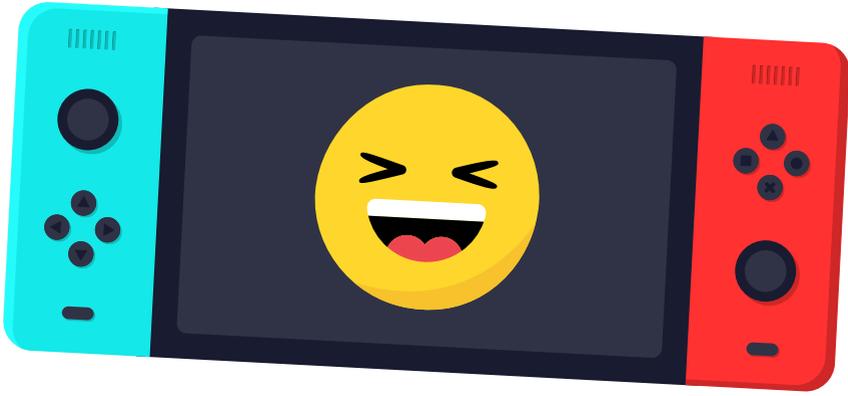
Cameron

Aged thirteen



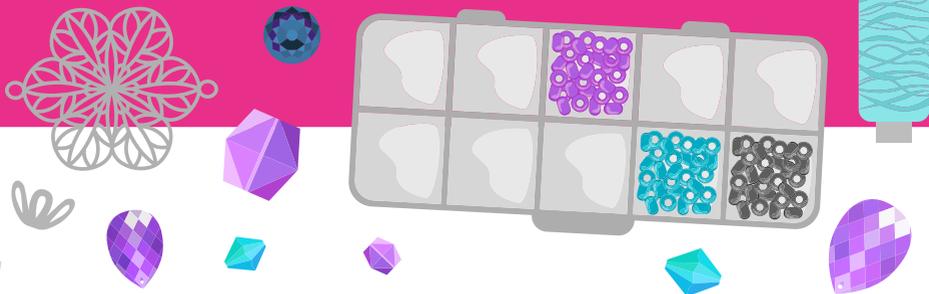
I'm Cameron, I'm going to be thirteen next week. I've got a sister who's fourteen and a brother who's fifteen. To be honest, they do my head in most of the time. It's annoying being the youngest but my aunty Trish is really sound to live with. We've had to live with her for a few years now; it feels a bit weird. None of my mates have someone else looking after them. But we don't have a mum or dad now, you see. We used to live in Spain all together until my dad did what he did. He took my mum away from me. I've not seen him for a few years now, he's in jail over there. My mum's an angel now; when I think about her she's in a long white dress and has blonde hair and a big smile. I miss her.

I'm gaming most of the time. I'm into Minecraft and Fortnite best - Trish tries to play them as a laugh sometimes and she's shocking! I'm dead close to her, she's there



for me. I've got loads of mates from school and we play against each other online. We have a laugh in school as well but sometimes I get into trouble so Trish thinks that some of them aren't good mates. She doesn't like all of them coming around. I punched a wall in school and broke my hand and she seems to think I was showing off to these mates, but I wasn't, I just get angry sometimes. I can't really get across what's going on. Trish is alright really though and she doesn't have it easy. She's got a stick to walk with and she can get really tired sometimes. I don't know what I'd do without her. I spend time with her watching movies and stuff.





I'm Jada; I'm six. Everyone always thinks I'm younger because I'm small. I've got a little brother, Ryan. He is only a baby. I really miss my mummy. She's been in prison a long time. I enjoy making stuff, painting and things like that. Dad's not as good with it as mum was but he does it with me. I like making jewellery too. I like showing mummy pictures of stuff that I've made. I like learning new stuff too. Daddy helps me with my homework. I try to do my best and be good at school for him and mummy.

I don't know why mummy's in prison. I hear little bits but I think it's something that all the grown-ups want to keep away from me. I know that mummy and daddy don't love each other but still love me. Before she went in, she was different, she was out all the time. Daddy's not perfect though, he was in prison when I was a baby, him and mum have been silly.



I think mummy was on drugs. I hear people say about drugs and see stuff on telly about that. I think mummy got in with the wrong people, that's what I heard my aunty saying. I want to know more. They think I can't hear when they are whispering. People cry sometimes, too. I know there's a group at PSS for grown-ups about drugs. Mummy could go to that when she comes out.

I don't talk to my friends in school about it. I feel like they wouldn't understand. They still come around and we play together and dance. I hope my mummy comes out soon. I don't know when she gets out. She's too far away to go to see her all the time. I worry about Ryan because he's only a baby and daddy can get tired because he says he's doing all the work of a mummy and a daddy. It's a lot for him.

Jada

Aged six





I'm Zainen, I'm eight. I'm made up to live back with my mum now. I was so happy when she got out of prison. It was supposed to be three months and it ended up being seven. We are the closest now. It's just me and her, I don't have brothers or sisters. So we were always close. I was angry at her for a bit but I need her and I love her so much. She is the best mum ever. I was so fed up of having to move about from house to house. I lived with nan mostly when mum was in prison, not my proper nan, mum's step-mum. She's more of a nan to me. Mum and her real mum fell out when she went to prison and because nan's husband is horrible. Mum's dad died a couple of years ago and she's always getting sad about that still. I don't remember him much but I give mum a hug when she's upset.



Zainen



Aged eight

I don't do much stuff outside of school, sometimes I ride my bike and play on the XBox. I like P.E in school and dance as well. I prefer staying with my mum, she misses me when I'm in school and sometimes there are bullies in school. They skit me because of my weight. Sometimes people aren't very nice. I prefer animals to people anyway. I wish we could get a dog but because we live in a flat upstairs we're not allowed. Mum's down sometimes, too, so a dog would most probably be nice around the house for her for a bit of company. I didn't meet my dad, my mum's ex-boyfriend was sort of like my dad. He's in prison now. He used to sometimes get angry with mum but we did have good times. I always worry that mum might go back into prison and just worry how she is. I try and save my pocket money to look after her and we're supposed to be going on holiday next year. That would be the best - we've never gone anywhere on a plane, just England and Wales!



When your family member gets arrested...

Well before your mum, dad or close family member has gone into prison, you might experience things that upset or worry you. Seeing somebody being arrested can be really hard to get your head around, especially when it's somebody you love. Or, you might not see this. You might get told what has happened. This can be difficult too. You're not alone, lots of people feel scared, confused and angry when their parent or close family member is arrested.



Evie, sixteen



I didn't actually see dad being arrested but I knew it was happening. He was just in court all of a sudden and it happened from there. I think, with him, that he must of got arrested in work, because that's where it all happened but I've never really thought about that part. It's just a blur when you find out. I'd hate to have been there for it. You'd be scared with someone coming in and taking your mum or your dad while you're just standing there. When you're older you know too much, really. There's enough stuff going on at this age with exams, who you are and what you want to do in the future. I always think of him being arrested like something from a film, like somebody in a room getting really threatened in an interview. That makes it seem more real. I've heard about people being in bed and the police knocking and waking them up and family members crying. That must be so horrible for them. My family worker says that it can help to talk about what you remember when it's something nasty but we did that in my time. I talked to her when I felt ready and I didn't have to.

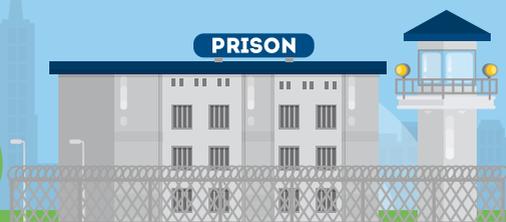
Cameron, thirteen



I don't remember dad being taken at all if I'm honest. I was dead little. I can't even properly remember our house in Spain, just how hot it was. I'm glad I don't remember. I remember more of the stuff that happened afterwards. It was just such a shock. I think because my mum had died I just forgot about everything else. There are bits that I think I have blocked out. My family worker said I might block things out to protect myself and cope better. I'm glad he did get arrested. I am beyond angry about what he has done to us. My aunty Trish said the police came in the night and took him away, and us. I remember bits about being in a car with them and being confused. My sister was crying. I suppose maybe she must have known more because she's older. It was just weird being separated from mum and dad at that age. I felt like I was an adult. I didn't know what would happen next.



There are **117 prisons**
in England





Jada, six

I can sort of remember people knocking at the flat. I got pushed to another room. You could hear them coming up the stairs loudly. I heard loads of noise and mummy was shouting like crazy. She sounded different to normal. I didn't like it. It wasn't nice. I wanted to help but I was silent. I was really scared. Daddy wasn't home then, just my aunty. Ryan was in his cot. My aunty was saying everything was fine and she kept stroking my head. She kept going in and out of the room and saying to stay with the cat. I did stay and then mummy wasn't there anymore. I didn't see who had knocked, I just heard a low voice. It was the policeman and he sounded nasty. I didn't understand how he could take mummy away. My friend had her daddy taken when she was at school. She came home and he was gone. Everyone just pretended he had gone away somewhere. She felt like people had lied to her. It's horrible to not know what happened. I don't like lies.

How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

You can talk to your PSS family worker about everything you've been through. You can talk about the arrest if you want to, whether you were there or not. You can also meet other children like you who might have been through the same things. You can meet them at PSS groups.



Zainen, eight

It's always been people knocking on our door, all the time. You just want them to go away. I would hide upstairs in my room. I used to do that sometimes when Tony lived here. I did like him but he would sometimes have a drink and get nasty so I'd just go away. Social workers would come and see us and talk to us. 'Just leave us alone, will you' is what I would always think. They spoiled it for us. When police came I was just thinking, 'Oh, again?' and then they took mummy with them. I was getting ready for school. Mummy said she would see me later. A lady officer took me and took me to my nan's in a car. I felt like I had done something bad. I didn't know where mum was going. She didn't say a proper goodbye to me, she was going to cry. But she said she'd see me again. But I didn't see her again. Not until she had a bit of time before she went to prison. I couldn't speak to her properly then though because she was always sad. I just got so mad with these police people. My mum is a nice person. It's not fair. That's what I thought.



If you don't want to talk about the arrest it might just help having people around you who understand. There's no pressure to talk, it's up to you.



Finding out your mum, dad or a close family member is going to prison...

When your parent or close family member is arrested, it can be a big shock. It might take a little while before your family know what's going to happen next. Your family might be waiting to hear about what happened, thinking about the future without your family member around or waiting to hear when they will go to court. It can seem very overwhelming, or not seem very real at all...



Evie, sixteen

I was shaken when I got told and confused because I didn't know what would happen. Because he kept getting bail, it took so long.

All he wanted to do was drink and he couldn't cope with it; he didn't want to face it. When he was on bail he was fed up, he just isolated himself. So, it was like he was already in prison before he went in. He worked in the prisons so he knew exactly what it was like. So, he couldn't cope with the thought of going in. It was hard to watch. I am annoyed that he got nine years. Obviously, he did something wrong and he has to face the consequences. Other children my age, they wouldn't take it very well if their dad did something like this but I just accept it. Deep down, I know what my dad did was wrong but he is still a good person, he just made a mistake. He has a heart, he is actually a really nice person. It's hard to know him as a person and know how he got to where he is. It's a hard journey to go on. I know people who can't cope with it. I think maybe because I've got my younger brother too, I hold it together more. But my family worker says it's ok to feel sad sometimes.

Cameron, thirteen

I was glad he went inside. I didn't want anything to do with him. Could you imagine your dad doing that? I wish I would have been older so I could have stopped it. I remember thinking, 'he's not a dad.' What dad does that? It still makes me so worked up thinking it. Now I think I'll speak to him one day but then it was just black and white. I thought no way you deserve a second chance, you may as well just be dead. I trusted him. He does deserve everything he gets now. I feel like I'm better off without him



Jada, six

I didn't know what to do when I knew she was going. My head hurt. I don't remember when daddy was in prison. I didn't think mummy would do the same. It's not fair. I felt like they didn't think about me. I love my mummy and I couldn't believe she would do something bad. I felt sad and like I was on my own. I used to cry and I wouldn't say to my friends why. You have too much in your head. I thought someone will stop it. I had some bad dreams and I was quiet. I'm usually always dancing and stuff. I just wanted to cuddle mummy and spend all my time with her. She wasn't the same though. She wasn't the same with me. She's a lot better now.



Zainen, eight

I was so angry when mum got taken away from me. I just kept asking why this was happening in my head. The thought of not having her there was horrible. And I felt like it wasn't fair. People get so much in their life and all I seem to have is bad stuff happen. I wasn't going into school and leaving my mummy because what if she didn't come and see me again and if something happened when she was inside? Mummy was crying all the time and I used to stay in her bed with her and cuddle her. She'd say that I'd be safe and not to worry and things but I'd just think I can't do it without you, what's even the point? Some people get everything and we just seem to get all the bad luck. It feels more normal now.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

When you first find out that your mum, dad or close family member is going into prison it can be really difficult for the whole family. Sometimes it's hard to talk to somebody in your family who is also feeling the same emotions. It can be good to talk to them but you may feel like you need somebody else who understands too. Your family worker will have met lots of people like you and learnt from them. They will understand what you're going through. You're okay to open up to them completely, they'll listen and understand and will be able to give you ideas about how to feel less anxious, scared and angry. You don't have to talk and you should do what you feel comfortable with. It's your choice.



There are different types of prison..

Prisons for men are organised into four categories:



Category A

These are high security prisons. Visits might not be possible or you may need to visit from behind a screen.



Category B

These prisons can be high security too or people can go there straight from court.



Category C

Most people in prison are here. There are opportunities to train and learn new skills here.



Category D - open prisons

These prisons have a lot less security and some prisoners can spend days outside of the prison.

Women and young adults

- Women and young adults would be in a closed prison or an open prison.
- Closed prisons are for people who have committed more serious crimes.



People you might meet when your parent, grandparent or sibling is in prison...

A prison officer

Prison officers look after the safety and security of your mum, dad or close family member when they are in prison. They might do things like taking them from prison to court when they need to get there and supervising them. They might also help your parent or close family member to learn new skills with training and courses and check in on their progress. They complete reports with your parent or close family member to mark how they are getting on, how they are feeling and what they have learnt since being in prison. This is called rehabilitation. It can be a bit like your reports in school to check how you are getting on.



If your parent or close family member gets sick in prison they can go and see a doctor or go to hospital just like you. The prison officer might go with them to appointments. Your parent or close family member might also get a chance to work and learn new skills. They could get experience to be a shop assistant, a cook, a cleaner, a gardener or another job. The prison officer can support them to learn skills for the job they want when they leave prison.

A probation officer

If your mum, dad or close family member is in prison for a number of years they may have a probation officer in the prison supporting them, and helping them get ready for life outside of prison. They carry on supporting them when they leave prison too. When your parent or close family member comes out of prison everything might not go back to normal straight away or at all. They might need some support to feel settled again.



A probation officer helps your mum, dad or close family member to plan for the future and be safe when they leave prison. They might help them to find a home, a job or to feel happier and healthier.

They will help your parent or close family member stay on the right track. If your mum, dad or close family member has issues with drugs or alcohol, they can help them to overcome these. Probation officers are a bit like teachers. Your parent or close family member goes to see them every week to learn how to make better choices and be happier in life. Your mum, dad or close family member might have to show the probation officer what progress they have made and what they've learnt. That's a bit like when your work gets marked in school. Sometimes you might not see your parent or close family member straight away when they come out of prison. They might just need a bit of time after prison to be the best they can for you. The probation officer is someone who helps to get them to this point.

A social worker

A social worker might be involved before or after your parent or close family member goes to prison. Their job is to make sure the whole family is safe, including you. Before your mum, dad or close family member goes into prison they might come and meet with you to see how you and your brothers and sisters are feeling, to check if you are happy and safe at home.



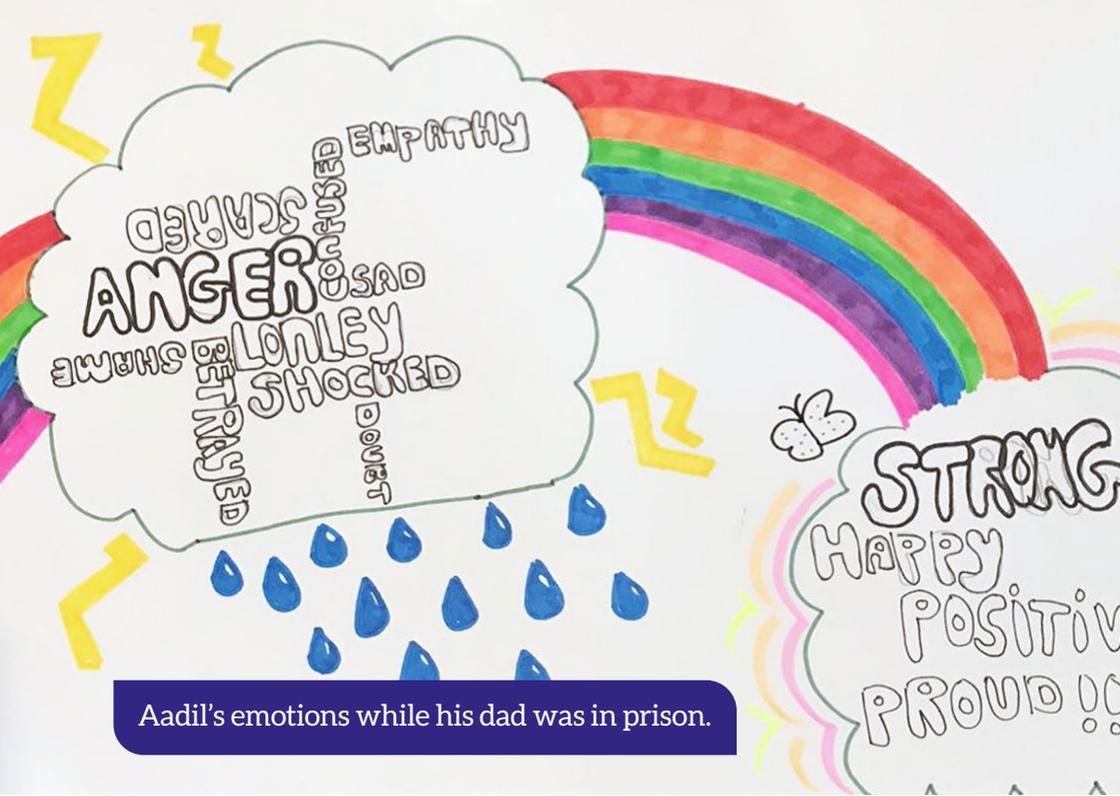
When your mum, dad or close family member leaves prison, your social worker will speak to your parent or close family member and their probation officer. Your social worker will want to know how your family member is doing. They might have some more learning to do and the social worker will be able to support them with that. How they progress will help your social worker and the other adults keeping you safe to make a decision on how you might spend time with your mum, dad or close family member.

It might be decided that your parent or close family member will have to get their own house, so you might not be living with them anymore but can still visit them. This might be because your home is calmer with everyone living separately and having their own space, a bit like when you might go to your bedroom for some time to yourself.

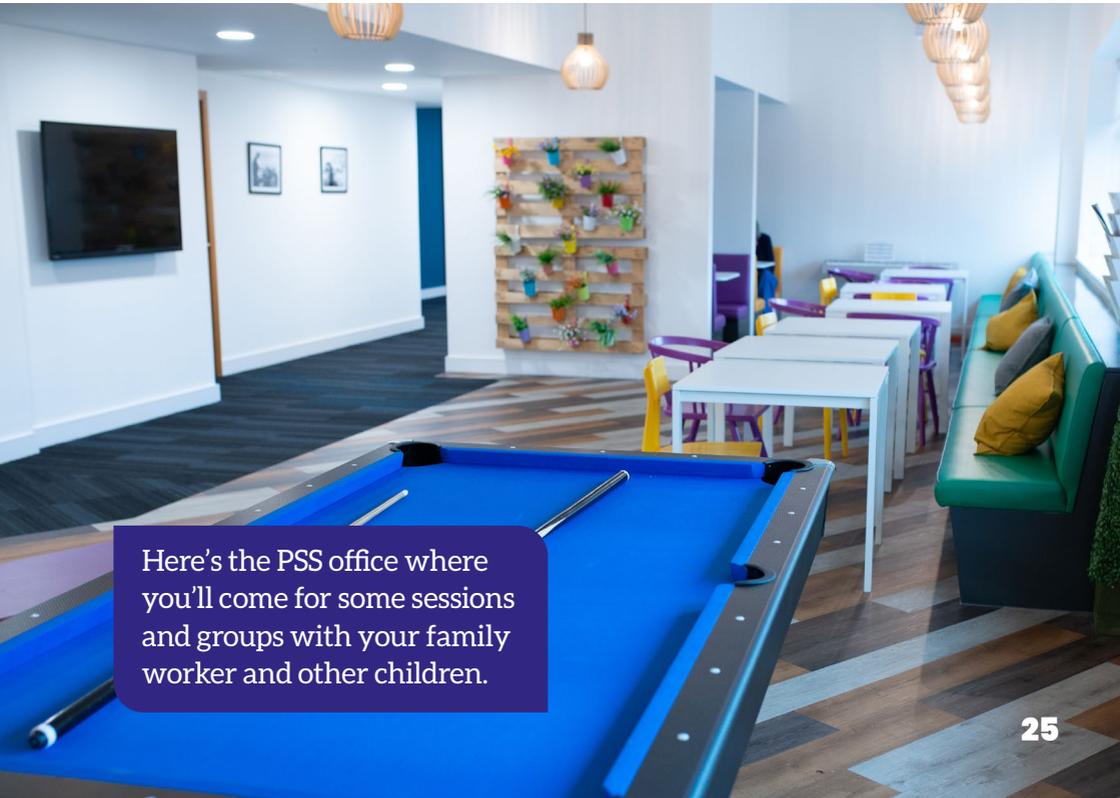
It might be that you go to a play area called a contact centre to spend time with your family member. The social worker will come to the contact centre too. This is so that they can support your mum, dad or relative because they might not feel fully ready to look after you.

It might be that there is a lot more learning your parent or close family member has to do before you can see them, and this could mean that you will be an adult when this happens.

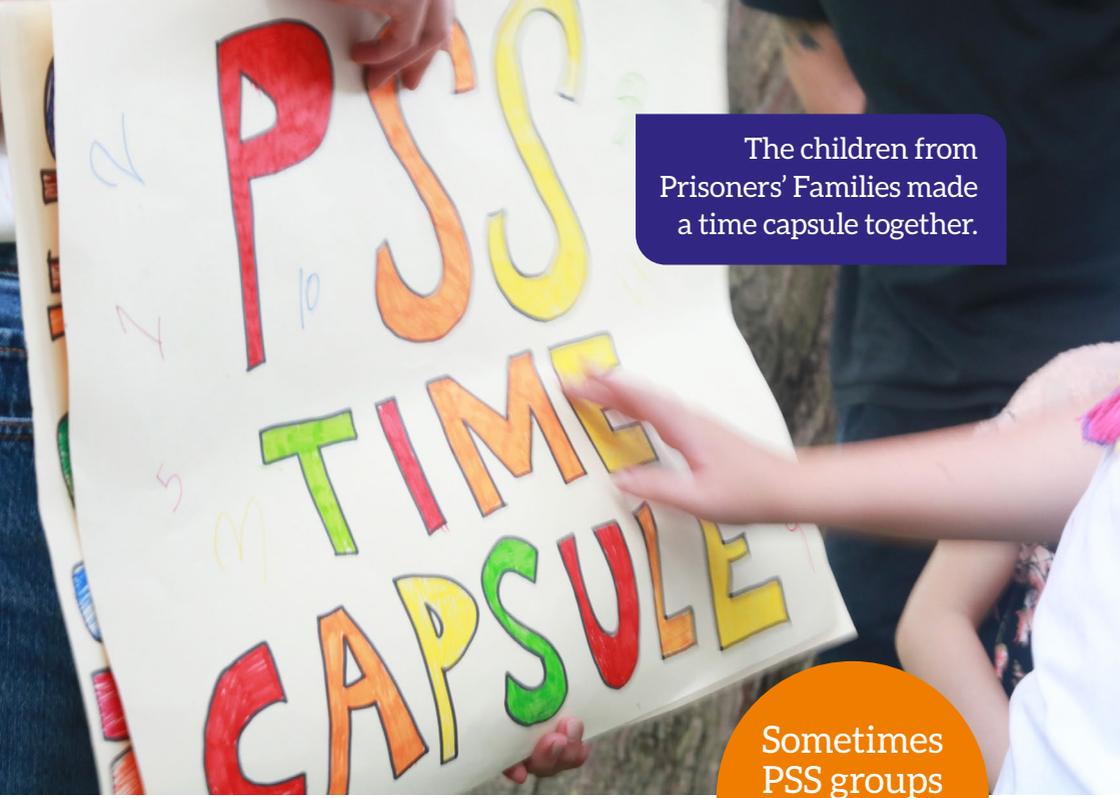
This might feel unfair but all of these decisions are made to keep everyone safe. Your family worker can help you find a way to deal with and express any difficult emotions you might be feeling in a way that suits you.



Aadil's emotions while his dad was in prison.



Here's the PSS office where you'll come for some sessions and groups with your family worker and other children.



The children from Prisoners' Families made a time capsule together.

Sometimes PSS groups happen outdoors



A trip to PSS Dutch Farm for a kickabout.

What is bail?

When someone gets arrested they might be allowed to go home until they go to court. That can be for a few weeks or months. Before they go to court they might have to follow some rules at home.



While they are on bail they will probably have to stay living at one address.



They might not be allowed to contact certain people.



They might have to give their passport to the police so they can't travel outside the UK.



They might have to go to the police station on some days. If they don't stick to these rules then they could be arrested again.

How do you feel when they're in prison?

When your parent or close family member goes into prison, your life will change a lot. You have to get used to them not being around and find different ways to contact them. Your routine might change. Where you live might change. Who you live with might change. There might be times when you struggle with how much you miss them or even with your new home set-up. Your family will also feel this and you might not get on with them as well as you used to. You might feel like you have to just get used to things but it's fine to feel this way, things take time...



Evie, sixteen



The rest of the family haven't accepted it as much. I have to accept it, don't I? That's what I think. You can't go back in time. My grandad and me keep everything to ourselves but, once in a while, we have a cry. My grandad can get angry. He just moans over him being in work all the time and every time he goes for a drink he says he wishes my dad was here. My nan's the same. I just think, you can't change what's happened. It's not like I can go to the judge and say, 'You're wrong, give me my dad back'. I try to just be strong. My family worker says that I can speak to her privately about anything that's worrying me at home, because it might be hard to speak to them about stuff. She said I don't have to be strong all the time. It's good knowing she's there if I need her.



Cameron, thirteen



I feel sad that my dad's in prison because I have no parents now, just Trish. But then when I think about why he is in prison I feel glad in a way. It's a mix of feelings. It can feel confusing. Because I want to know him some days but then I'm scared to see him. Me and my brother fight all the time and other dads would sort it out but we don't have that. My brother and sister absolutely do my head in, I get so fuming with them. I miss having someone, just not him. I wish I just had another dad and I wish I was older and had my own life and stuff. I get jealous of my mates who go the footy with their dads or go for food and stuff but I do love aunty Trish, don't get me wrong. Obviously. I've made some mates from coming to groups here. That's been good. We don't have to talk about it but I know they might feel the same.



Jada, six

I just want mummy to come out, it seems like forever and ever and ever. She misses stuff like she's not at my parents' night or at my dance shows and I miss her curling my hair. I miss girly stuff with mummy but I am a daddy's girl. I just do everything normal but then some days I miss her too much. Like when we go to parties for my friends in school and their mums are there. That makes me feel sad. I feel embarrassed sometimes. I talk to Molly. She comes to PSS too. She has her dad in prison too. She's eight and a half. She is like a big sister. I like having her and she is funny.



Zainen, eight

It was the worst when mum wasn't here. I couldn't cope or be bothered. She's like a million percent for me, does everything. When it's other people, they're never going to be your mum. My step-nan is the best, she was always there for me and we talked loads about mum and that was good. It's not the worst living with your nan at all. They spoil you and stuff. Nan gets sad too. We talked about the good times with mum and got sad together. And sometimes I talked to my family worker at PSS.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

There is bound to be a lot of things to get used to when your mum, dad or close family member goes into prison. There might be times when you miss them a lot, there might be times when you struggle to get on with other family members, there will be times when you feel angry or upset and might not understand why. You can talk to your family worker about all of this stuff. Nothing will seem silly to them. They will listen. They will also be able to give you ideas of ways to cope better with how you're feeling and with your family. Your grandparent and carer can come to groups too at PSS. Or you can just listen and learn in your own time. That can help too. You can do that on your own, with a family worker or in a group.

We're here to listen



Emotions you might feel when your mum, dad or close family member are in prison...

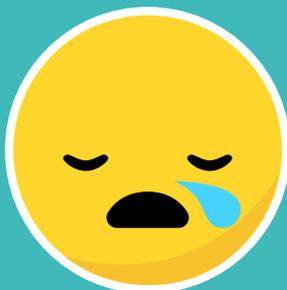
Shocked



Embarrassed



Sad



Confused



Angry



Guilty



Worried



Do you feel any other emotions?

You might find it hard to explain how you feel

Visiting your parent or close family member in prison...

Going to see your mum, dad or close family member in prison can seem a little bit strange. You might feel scared and anxious before it, lots of people do. There's nothing to worry about. You will just have to get checked to make sure everything is safe before you go in and you might have to wait for a bit. Once you get inside you can usually visit for two hours and have a good chat to your parent or close family member. There are different types of visits, too. A closed visit means you will sit behind glass to speak to your mum, dad or close family member. There are also family days when you can do activities and have fun with your mum, dad or close family member for longer with other families like yours...



Evie, sixteen

I've been to see dad three times since last year. When you see those big gates it can feel a bit scary. It's a bit weird because you've got like all the prisoners there looking at you and my dad's in a high security wing where he's got to be watched. He sits upstairs and sits on a table separated off but as soon as you see him it just changes your mood completely because he's so happy and smiley. It's hard leaving because you've got to say goodbye until next time. You can speak on the phone obviously but that can be hard because you can't see him. He just moans about being in there when I call him up. He's trying to move prisons. He's trying to move to a Category C from a Category B. That just means it won't be so strict. I always imagine him getting off the phone and starting to cry or shouting. It's still good that you can talk though. You have to just think of that. And letters can be so nice to get in the post. You don't get stuff like that now, do you? My family worker says because dad hasn't been in prison before, he might still be getting used to it.

Cameron, thirteen



I've not been to see my dad. I can't. He's in prison in Spain. It's like something out of a film. I don't know if I'd go and see him if he was in England. Aunty Trish thinks it might be a good idea for me, because he's my dad and he's her brother but I feel like he's not really been a dad to me. I've no idea what I would say to him. Where would I even start and how could I just have a normal conversation about the footy or something with him? And then I can't just come out and say all the things that I'm really dying to say either. I feel like I can't just ask him about everything. I think if I went to see him, if he does come home, that would be a closed visit. He'd be on the other side of glass because of what he did. That would be strange. I've decided to write a letter to him, just to start. My family worker said she can help me with writing it.



Jada, six



I love seeing mummy's face. It's weird in the room with all the other people. I sometimes can't remember all the stuff I wanted to tell her. I try and play a game where everyone else in the room is invisible. I just look at mummy. She is always happy to see me. I thought she would be sad. When you go in you get searched and dogs sniff you. I love dogs though. The waiting is ages sometimes. The time goes fast when we see her. Mummy and daddy sometimes have to talk in private. I play in the play area then. The people there are nice and we colour in and make stuff too. I draw mummy pictures when I go and she says she sticks them on her wall. They have party days, too. We have games and win stuff. You get to stay longer and all the families go. They do special ones for Christmas and Santa comes.

Zainen, eight



I missed mum so much when she was in prison. I'm glad she's home now. When I got to see her, I felt better. I had lots to tell her about and she needed me. She did seem a bit different than normal but still herself. I actually loved seeing the dogs! I wanted to stroke them but you're not allowed. That's what we ended up talking about sometimes, getting a dog when we she got out. We got excited about the future. We didn't talk much about anything bad because you want to make the most of it. I didn't want to tell her if I was sad but sometimes she could just tell anyway so she'd say stuff to make me feel better. I went into prison with my family worker once. She made me feel less worried about it.

How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

Your family worker can tell you all about the prison visit before you go. That means you will know what to expect. They can explain the different types of visits, too. If you're worried about anything just ask them because they know what it's like in the prison. Your family worker might even take you on a visit to see your mum, dad or close family member. That can be arranged if you would like to see them on your own, without a family member. Lots of people find that going into prison isn't as bad as they thought so just try to stay calm and ask any questions before you go if you can. Turn the page for more information on what to expect on a prison visit.



What happens on a prison visit?

Here's a little guide to what usually happens when you go to visit your mum, dad or close family member in prison:



Before a visit

You can talk to your family worker about everything and they will tell you exactly what to expect with the prison you're going to. All prisons are different.



Arriving at the prison

When you get to the prison there will be a visitors' entrance. That's where you go in. Someone will welcome you in. You'll usually sit in the waiting room before being taken through security.



Time for a selfie

Anyone that visits the prison has to have their photograph taken. The staff will pop your photo onto the computer before your visit. This is to keep everyone safe, so they know who's visiting.



Let's get your prints

If you're over ten the staff will need to get a little fingerprint from you too. Every time you visit, you'll pop your fingers into a fancy scanner that can detect that it's definitely you.



Stamp it

The staff will stick a stamp on your hand so they know that you're a visitor. You'll usually get a ticket with a number on it and they'll shout that out when it's your turn to go in.



Your wristband

Sometimes you'll get a wristband too, usually if you're a teenager. This is so staff can see that you're a visitor.



Pop your shoes in the box

You might want to wear your best socks because the team will ask you to take off your shoes and any belts before you come in. You'll see these go through a little scanner. It's a bit like being at the airport.



Time for a scan

You will then be asked to step through a scanner. This can spot if you've got any metal, so you'll need to empty any change from your pockets first.



Welcome to the visitors' area

You'll now be good to enter the visitors' area of the prison. You'll get to rest your legs while you wait for your number to be called out and your visit to start. There's usually games and stuff you can do while you wait.

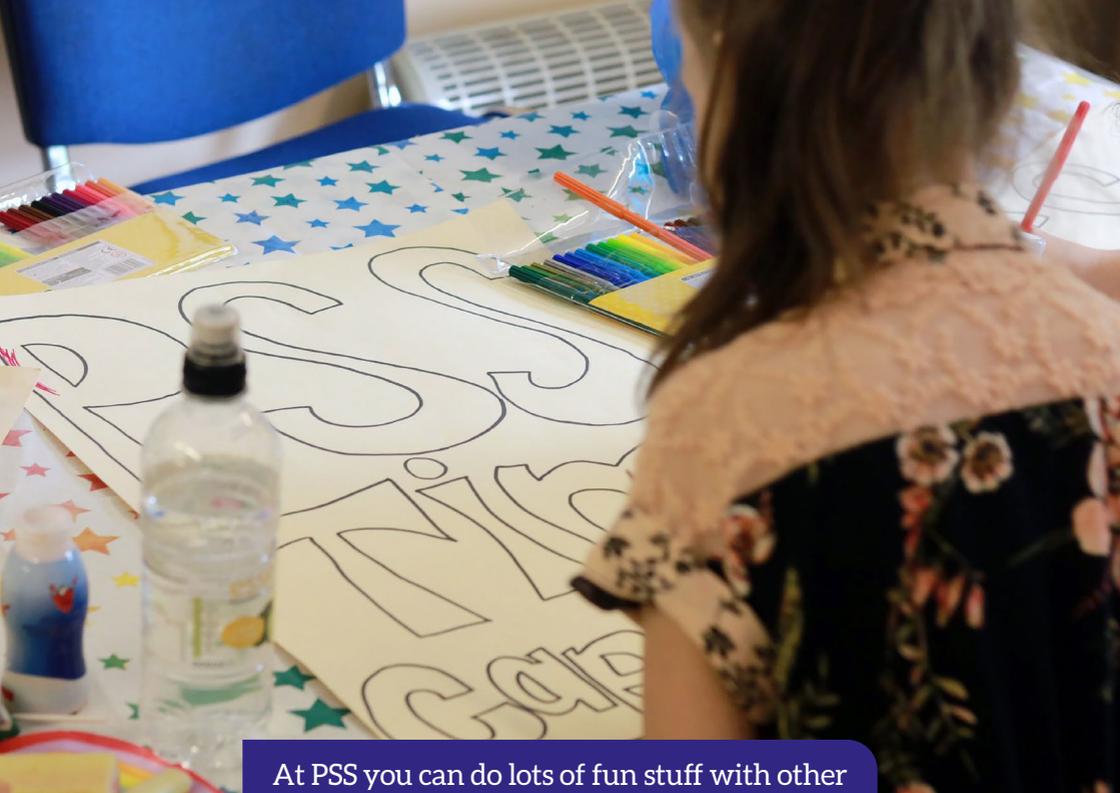
See you at the next family day

Lots of prisons have family days where you can come along to see your parent or close family member with other children. There's different stuff happening each time but it could be things like: face painting, arts and crafts and special visits from different entertainers.



Don't worry if you can't visit your family member in prison. Lots of children can't visit their parent or close family member in prison because...





At PSS you can do lots of fun stuff with other children and go on days out as a group.



How do you cope while they're not at home?

Your life will change a lot when your parent or close family member is in prison and you will feel lots of different emotions. You don't have to ignore these feelings. There are ways that you can manage these feelings and feel happier...



Evie, sixteen

We've got good stuff coming up soon because my aunty's pregnant, she's having a baby boy, so that's exciting. I keep looking forward to all the good things and not back at the bad things, that's how I cope. I like doing things that we used to do as a family, like going the pictures, that's good. I talk to my friends too but just the ones that I trust.



Coming to PSS has helped me as well. I didn't open up to my family worker properly for a long time, I just talked about school and stuff like that. But even talking about stuff like school arguments helps. If I don't open up one day then it's ok. My family worker does different stuff with me that takes your mind off it. She feels like a friend but so much more, because I couldn't speak to an actual friend about this stuff. I made a memory box too, filled with stuff that reminds me of dad. There's photos of holidays and his watch in there. He loves his watches! All his letters go in there too. It's nice to look at that. I've got a whole folder on my phone with funny pictures of him. They make me howl laughing.

Cameron, thirteen



I chill with my friends and we just play games and stuff like that. I'm into rap music as well and started writing stuff the other week. It sounds weird but I can sort of relate to rappers. They haven't had easy lives either and they use it for good. I like Stormzy.

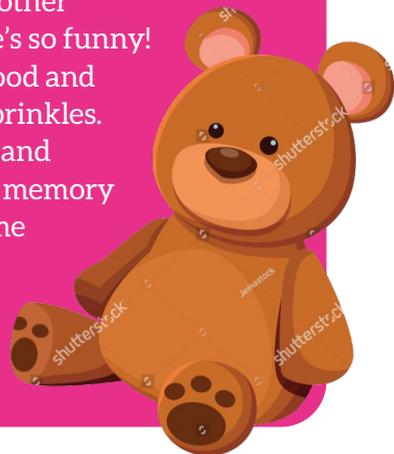
I decided to write to my dad for the first time. That might not fix things but I wanted to try. It's funny things that you miss or you could do with having them around for. Like the other week, I had to YouTube how to shave because I got hairs coming up on my chin. You would normally ask your dad about that. That's when I notice and I feel like I'm missing out.



Jada, six

I like doing stuff with my dad still. He takes me for ice-cream and we go shopping. I like making stuff. I save all the stuff I make for mum when she comes home.

The groups are good too because there's other children. I'm best friends with Molly, she's so funny! We go climbing and bowling and have food and stuff together. I like the cakes with the sprinkles. We talk about what's happening as well and sometimes dad comes. It's good. I made a memory box there. The smell of mummy's perfume makes me think of her, so I put that in. I put another thing in whenever I miss her. I cuddle my teddy bear that mummy gave me. He reminds me of her.



Zainen, eight

I prefer it now mum is out of prison because I didn't do much when she was in there. I liked to stay in. I was shy in the groups and I didn't want to get into it much.

I used to play these games with my family worker that were a laugh. We still do them now mum is out too. My family worker comes and sees me, just the two of us and we play games but it gets me talking about stuff too. It's not just sitting chatting, it's fun and I do honestly feel happier when I come out. We read a story called Mighty Mo as well that was all about feelings and that made things make sense.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

There's lots of ways that coming to PSS can help you to feel happier. You will get a chance to meet people like you. You can make stuff like 'missing you boxes' to collect things that remind you of your mum, dad or close family member.

It can sometimes help to look back at the good times and remember what you love about them. And, you can always write a letter to your parent or close family member or arrange a visit or call. Your family worker can help you with what to write in your letter. It's totally up to you. You can always talk to your family worker. You can talk to them on your own whenever you are struggling. They will listen to you. If they have any worries that you might not be safe they might need to pass that information on to someone who can support you.

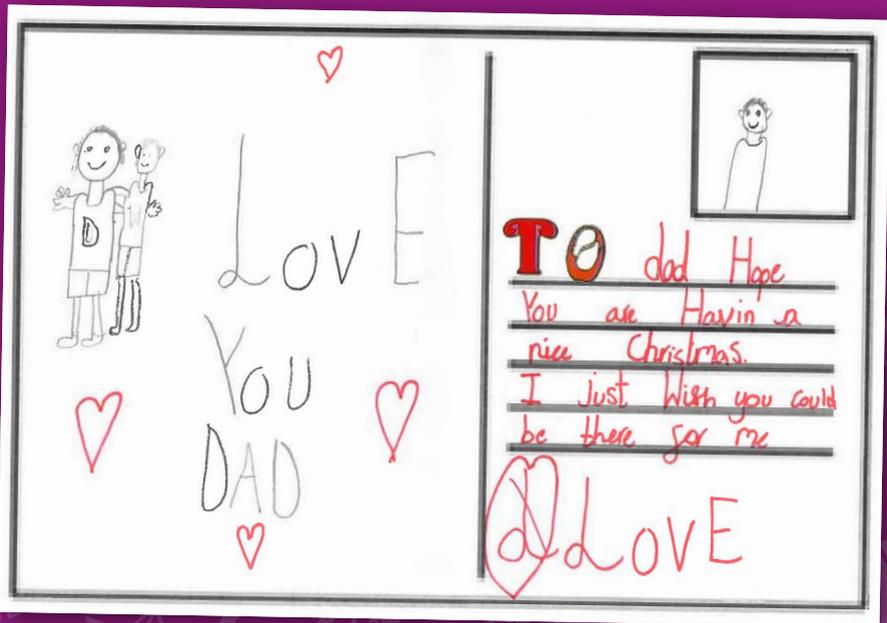


Here's a picture of a 'missing you box' that Ciara aged ten made during a group. These have things in them like photos, tickets from events you've been to together, presents your mum, dad or close family member has



bought you, pictures you've drawn of them, things you've made for them and poems you've written about them. You put something in to look back on whenever you want to.

Here's a postcard that Leo aged five sent to his dad in prison. That could be a nice way to show your parent or close family member that you're thinking about them, like a letter but simpler. You might not have lots to say. It's good to stay in touch at Christmas and birthdays. Leo sent this Christmas postcard to his dad.



Here's a letter that Ryan aged eleven got from his dad in prison. Writing to his dad and getting nice replies like this back help him to feel less worried about how his dad is doing.

To Ryan,

Daddy misses you every day and can't wait to see you and talk about what you have been up to.

Daddy will be out of prison for your next birthday so hopefully me, you and Jake can go to the pictures or the park for a game of football. I will let you decide what you want to do.

I miss you loads every day.

All the best and always remember I love you to the moon and stars and back.

Love you lots and lots.

Love,

Daddy



DADDY



To daddy I miss you very much
 I wanted to tell you I have
 ault gymnastics to go to dance
 club and school is going awesome
 I just wanted to know why you
 keep on getting moved and its
 so hard to find a dance club
 I'm in a read write inc group
 with mr. white what do you do?
 and do you have friends?



Here's a letter written by Molly aged six whose dad is in prison. Writing can be a great way to get your emotions on paper and feel better about things.

How is school?

School can be difficult enough sometimes. You might have problems with bullies, you might get into trouble a lot or you might struggle with your homework. When your parent or close family member is in prison, sometimes this can take over your head. That might mean you find it hard to concentrate in school. You might also feel upset sometimes during school time and this might affect how you are doing with work and being with friends. Sometimes you might think that people in school don't understand or you might feel embarrassed. You might not want to talk to teachers about stuff or feel like they will judge you or treat you differently...



Evie, sixteen



I struggle more in school than I do at home. Some of that's about what I'm going through. I just couldn't be bothered doing any work so I stopped listening and just sat there with my head down. It's hard to care about school stuff when you feel like your world's falling apart. You've just got so much going on in your head. It feels constant. I get on with some of the teachers, but most of them do my head in. I don't feel like talking to them about stuff, I feel like they wouldn't get it. Sometimes I had to have some time off, just because it got a bit too much. Nan let me stay at home when I was really struggling. It's like having a day off sick isn't it, just it's more what's going on in your head, not your body. There's a teacher who I have just started talking to a little bit. She doesn't teach me but she's a school counsellor. Because I was struggling in class I went to speak to her. She's not like the other ones, she's really sound and not pushy at all. I don't trust all my mates and I don't always want to talk to them about everything. So it's good having her at school as well as my family worker outside of school.

Cameron, thirteen



Well, the only good bit about school is my mates are there. I get sick to death of being stuck at home with my brother. I get so angry with him at times. At school the lads are just way more chilled out, not on at me like him. I just get into trouble all the time because I don't take stuff seriously at school. The teachers moan. I punched a wall a few weeks ago. Trish had to come in and they were going to suspend me. Everyone used to tell me I have anger issues, like there is something wrong with me, but my family worker says anger is a normal emotion to feel in a difficult situation. I just need to learn not to hold all my thoughts and feelings in all of the time, that's why I can go off like a shaken bottle of fizzy pop. I do boxing now, this helps me to let go of my anger in a better way where I don't hurt myself. I didn't like having to get taken out of class to talk to someone. I found it embarrassing. I like talking outside of school, that's fine. I want to keep things separate so I can be normal and stuff to my mates. I get that I have problems trusting people. Trish talks to me about it and we're going to see the doctor because I struggle with it. Mental health stuff, you know. You see celebrities and everything talk about that now. It's normal. I just don't talk to the lads about that.





Jada, six



I love school. It's the best. I've got a group of friends and our teacher is good. She's so, so nice to me. She's like the one on Matilda. She lets me stay after class with her if I'm waiting to get picked up. After school club is like that too. I like one of the teachers that does that as well. I don't talk to other children about stuff with mummy. There's a lady I go and see in school. It's not just talking. We play games and make stuff and that helps. That makes school better because I did used to get upset. If we have to write what we did at the weekend, people would say: me and mummy did this and that. And I got sad then. I was just quiet then. I couldn't do my work. Now it's better. I'm happier.

Zainen, eight



School is so annoying, I just wish I could stay with my mum. I get picked on. I beg my mum not to go into school. I was coming home crying and she got upset then, too. I sometimes say that I'm sick so that I don't have to go in. Sometimes I just like being on my own, so I sit in the classroom with a teacher. We talk sometimes about home and what's happening. She's trying to get me to spend more time with the friends I do have. I need to be with people my age. I sometimes worry mum's going to go away while I'm in school. My teacher told me about someone called a mentor in school. So, I started talking to her about stuff. Then I found out that other children in school have a mum, dad or close family member in prison. I don't know who but I couldn't believe that. That made me feel better.

How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

Your family worker can talk to you about everything. From how you're getting on at school to your family life. If you are struggling to cope with school and friends, you can tell them if you want to. This will be between just you two. They can give ideas of how you can feel better. And, if you want them to, they can also chat to your teacher or somebody else in your school. Then, together they can find ways to support you and help feel happier in school. You don't have to talk about school with your family worker. Talk to them about whatever you like.

How are you feeling?

How are you getting on at school?

Is anything worrying you?



How can coming to Prisoners' Families groups help?

The ways that the Prisoners' Families team support you depends on what works best for you. You can decide. You will have a family worker to work with you on your own and you can also go to groups with other children like you. There are clubs you can come to over the school holidays where you can meet other children like you and do fun stuff. Sometimes other people will come in to do projects with you, too. A writing project often happens when you can write poems and stories and show these to your families at special events if you want to. We also celebrate things like Easter, Christmas and Halloween together and have little parties.



Evie, sixteen

I don't do group stuff right now, I sit with my family worker and we just talk about stuff. She even takes me to McDonald's sometimes. She's a sort-of friend but not like my normal friends because I know that she can help me a lot too. Basically, she just listens when I'm chatting on. She doesn't rush me or anything, like we don't have to go straight to the point of 'how are you feeling?' Or talking about my dad and what happened. It's not what I expected. We just talk about all sorts and then things just naturally get to family bits that have happened and suddenly she says something that makes me think. It's like she just gets what's going on in my head - she's a mind reader, I say! I think I'm going to start going to the groups sometimes now with some of the older girls. Because my dad's not long been inside, I needed to sort my own head out first. I might start going out with the older girls. They said we can go to play crazy golf or go to Nando's maybe.

Cameron, thirteen

So, I thought it would be dead boring. I've done counselling and loads of stuff before. I hated it. I just didn't want to sit down and talk for hours, trying to figure out what's up with me. I didn't know we got to go on days out with PSS. We went to one of those indoor climbing places last week, it was boss! We do stuff at Christmas too like have a little party together and Santa comes for the little children - that's funny seeing how made up they get. I struggle with my own family and we can't talk about stuff, we just end up fighting so here is somewhere I can just come and be myself and speak to other people.

Aunty Trish has started going to a group at PSS too. She seems to love it! Because she's got a bad chest she worries about her health and looking after us so I think she talks about that.



Jada, six

I made some new best friends coming to groups. We talk outside the group too, we do Tic Tocs. Laurie and Molly are funny.

We make up games and paint. We made houses from boxes one day. Mine was a castle. It had rainbow glitter on. I really like all the people who work here. I have fun with them. I've made stuff to give to mum and we write letters together to send. We made boxes for when we miss mums and dads.

Zainen, eight

At the moment, I like meeting with my family worker on my own and talking to her. I spend my time with my mum mostly and we like doing stuff together after school. If I went to groups, I would worry about mum being on her own. But I did do the writing project. That was really good. There was an open day where we could read our poems and parents came in. I was too shy to read mine but my family worker read out for me and people were crying and everything. It really touched them. My family worker and I read stories together and then talk about feelings and worries. We talk about all the stuff I'm worried about when I can't sleep. I understand things more now.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

If you want to sign up for any of this fun stuff, chat to your family worker. They can arrange for you to join the group activities. If you would prefer to do stuff on your own with them instead, that's fine too. Everything is up to you and your family worker can give you ideas of what might help.





Around
10,000 visits
are made by
children to
public prisons
every week.

(NICCO.org.uk)

Can prison be a good thing?

Even though you will miss your mum, dad or close family member and it might be hard without them, prison can be good. It's a good way for them to learn from wrong choices. It might help them to become a happier person, too. They might get some help when they are in prison. If they had difficulty managing their emotions, there are courses they can take to overcome that. If they had issues with drugs or alcohol, they can sometimes get help to recover in prison. If they want to learn new skills, they can sometimes do courses to learn or get a qualification. It can actually be a time for them to grow as a person even though they might not feel happy all the time. Lots of people say that their mum, dad or close family member is a better parent when they come out of prison...

*An estimated
310,000 children
every year have a
parent in prison
in England.*

(NICCO.org.uk)



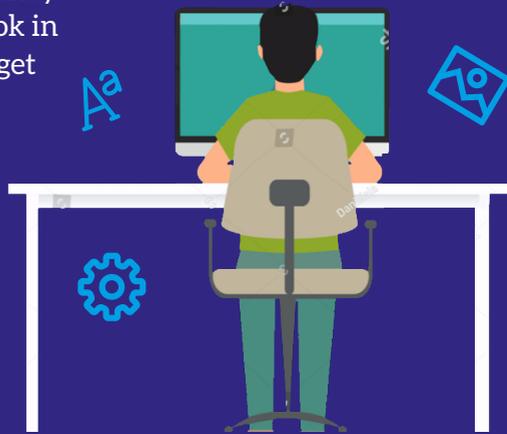
Evie, sixteen



I think my dad needs to be in prison to learn his lesson after what he did. I think the time does seem too long but it's because of who he is. He shouldn't have risked everything and done that at the end of the day. He used to get dead angry but he's calmed down a bit. He knows what he's done is wrong, of course he does. He's obviously gutted he can't see us but he's learning about what he did and himself. He's realised he's been wrong and I hope it makes him a better person. He's promised he will never let us down again. I believe him.

Cameron, thirteen

You've got to lock people like my dad up. What he did is just the worst. You can't expect people to get away with stuff like that. I don't know much about what he's doing there but I guess he will be having time to think about what he did. He needs to do that. And I know that there's stuff they can do in prison too, like different courses to learn and stuff like that. They do things that figure out why they did what they did. He's obviously not ok in his head so he needs to get better and in prison he can do that I suppose.



Jada, six

My mummy has been so lovely when I go to see her. It's like she loves me more. She was in the house less before she went into prison. Sometimes she wasn't that nice. Now she's always happy to see me. I am closer with her. Daddy said that when she comes out she will be a better mummy to me. He says she learns stuff in there. She had some problems and they are fixing that with her.

Zainen, eight

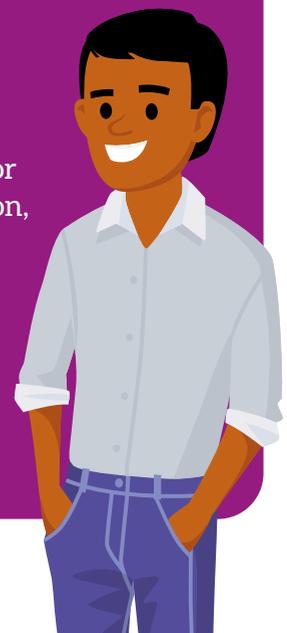


Mum is still upset a lot but she is closer with me now. We do lots of stuff together. Before she used to stay inside a lot and in her room and she didn't talk much. Now we are busy and we have nice teas together and she seems more happy. She goes to places now where they talk about what she did and why she was in prison. She goes to groups and meets people like her that did prison. They have children too. That helps her. Going to prison doesn't mean my mum is a bad person. My mum just made bad choices, but now she is making better ones. Mum gets support from my family worker too and another lady as PSS. She helps mum stay safe in relationships and that helps keep us both safe, so hopefully mum won't meet another person like my step-dad.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

If you're worried about how your mum, dad or close family member might be coping in prison, you can talk to your family worker. They might be able to explain what it's like to be in prison and tell you about that. You might not want to talk to your parent or close family member about prison but your family worker can help you to find the best ways to ask them how they're doing.



Reaching for the Stars



When your mum, dad or close family member comes out of prison

There are lots of different feelings you might have about your parent or close family member coming out of prison. You might feel excited and you might also feel worried or nervous. You might feel all of these feelings. You might worry about how the family will cope with this. You might want things to be perfect or go back to normal and that might not happen right away, or it might not happen at all. It might be that your mum, dad or close family member is in prison for a very long time and you wonder when it will be that you actually see them. The important thing is, whatever you're feeling, that's normal and you can talk about it if you want to. You don't have to feel one way or the other but it's good to think about the future ahead...



Evie, sixteen

I wish it wasn't going to be so long but you never know what will happen, I try to stay positive. Some

of my friends here said their parents got out earlier. I just think that would be a bonus. I get that might not happen with him. Dad says when he comes out we're going to do all sorts as a family. It will be weird that I'll be so much older then. I might even have my own family. It's nice to think that dad will be there for that. He'll always be a part of my life anyway but it's going to be so good having him back one day.



Cameron, thirteen



That will be in a long, long time and I'm not sure how I'll feel then. I can stay in touch with him for now if I want to. That's what we talk about here, doing things when I feel ready. I don't need to know for definite how I will react. It would be good to meet my dad again one day, because he is my dad after all. I can talk to people about it for now if I want to. I will be an adult myself when dad comes out. I think about going to the pub with my dad and stuff like that as an adult but I don't have to decide right now.



Jada, six

I am so excited for mummy to come out. It's going to be the best. Daddy says things might be different. I'm not sure who I will live with. They will split me up between mum and dad. I can have sleepovers with one. I will miss us living together but daddy says I might like it. Friends have parents that have split up and they are fine. Families are different sizes and shapes, my nan says. Mummy said we can go to the Disney on Ice show and do stuff together. Molly said when her mummy got out she was a better mummy. Her daddy has a new girlfriend. My mummy is so good at dancing too so we can do Tic Tocs together, she said.



Zainen, eight

It's the absolute best having mummy home. I sometimes feel embarrassed about telling people what she has done but I talk to my family worker about that. I didn't want to say that to mummy because I didn't want her to get hurt. It's ok to talk to my family worker because it's all private between us. Having mummy home is the best feeling ever. She is still sad sometimes but I can see why sometimes and I understand. We have to be there for each other. Sometimes I just give her a cuddle and it makes me happy that she is happy. I'm still hoping we can get a dog! That would just be the best. She hasn't said no yet.



How can PSS Prisoners' Families support me?

You can talk to your family worker about absolutely anything that is worrying you or anything you are unsure about. They can help to get you ready for your mum, dad or close family member coming out of prison and help you to plan for this and understand all the timings, changes that might happen and ways your parent or close family member might be feeling. Or, if you prefer not to talk, that's fine too. Your family worker will still give you advice.

What do you want to talk about?



Mummy and me



mummy



How you can get advice over the phone:

The National Prisoners' Families Helpline can support you over the phone if your parent or close family member is in prison.

Call: 0808 808 2003

The Helpline is open 9am – 8pm Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday. Except for Bank Holidays.

What's next?

If you live in Merseyside and have a parent or close family member in prison you can get support from our PSS Prisoners' Families team.

Talk to your parent, the person who cares for you, your teacher, social worker or anyone you trust about this.

They can then contact the Prisoners' Families team for you on: **0151 706 6701**.

Or, if you feel confident enough to, you can call that number yourself.

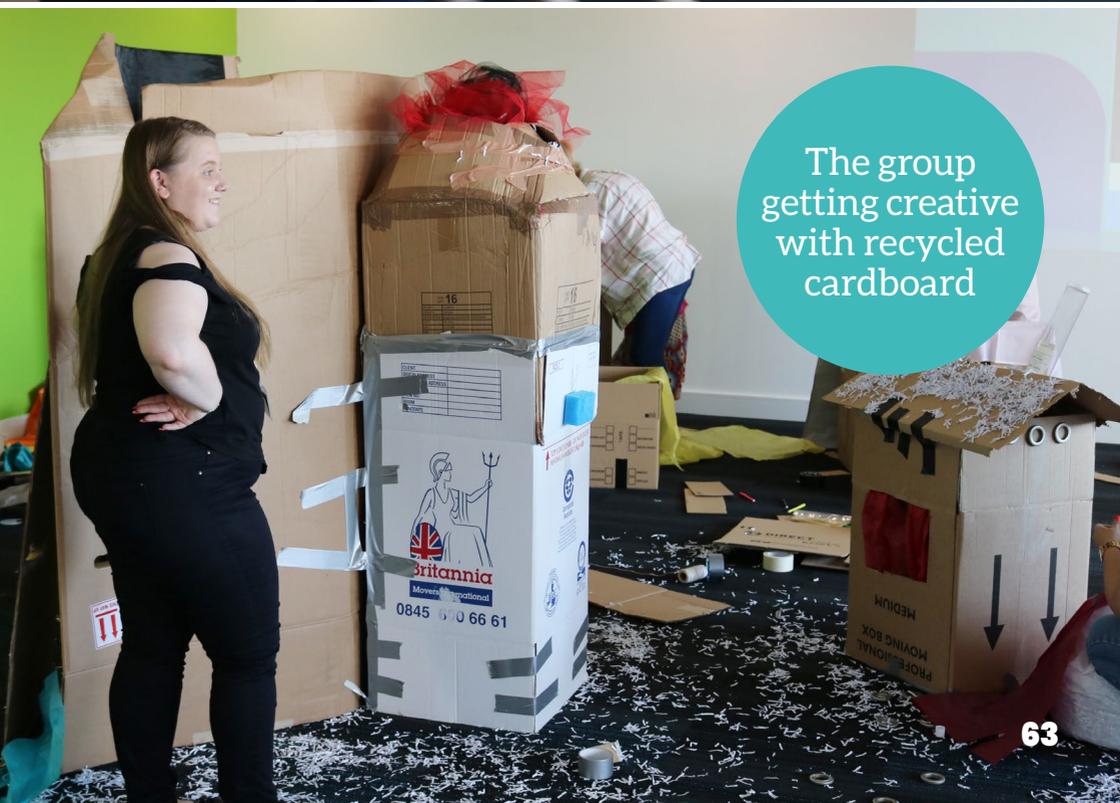
The team will talk through everything and fill out a form with your details. They might ask to meet you in person at home or at school or college. That way they can chat to you about the best options for you.

You can also check out some websites for more advice and online support:

- prisonersfamilies.org
- childline.org.uk
- familylives.org.uk
- barnardos.org.uk
- jigsawcharity.org.uk

Or, you can call the national Prisoners' Families Helpline on **0808 808 2003**
Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm,
Saturday and Sunday 10am - 3pm.





The group
getting creative
with recycled
cardboard

The PSS Prisoners' Families team support children like you who have a close family member in prison. This could be your mum, dad; brother or sister or a grandparent.

The team understand what you're going through when a family member is in prison and help you to understand all your emotions. They also give you advice on what to expect when someone goes into prison and ways to make this difficult time a bit easier.

Don't Worry is told by Evie (aged 16), Cameron (aged 13), Jada (aged 6) and Zainen (aged 8) who all have experience of their parent being in prison. They talk about every stage of their parent going into prison, how they found it and their advice to other people in that situation. You can also find advice on things like going on a prison visit, how to cope while your family member is in prison and how it might affect the whole family.

Whatever you're feeling about your family member going into prison is completely normal. And whether you feel scared, angry, sad or can't explain how you're feeling this book should help you to manage what you're going through and feel happier.

The PSS logo consists of the lowercase letters 'pss' in a white, sans-serif font, followed by a white asterisk symbol. This is set against a dark green, rounded rectangular background.

psspeople.com



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