

# Women Prisoners from Wales

Children Affected by Parental  
Imprisonment Cross Party Group

Robert Jones

# Aims

- To map out the situation of women's imprisonment in Wales
- To discuss the effects that distances are having
- Future debates on women's imprisonment

# Context

- No prison in Wales for women
- All Welsh women held in prisons across England
- Problems facing Welsh women widely recognised (e.g. Welsh Affairs Committee, 2007)

# England and Wales

- The number of female prisoners across England and Wales has fallen
- In England and Wales, the number of women in prison has **decreased** by 8.4% from May 2012 to Dec 2014
- From 4234 (May 2012) to 3878 (Dec 2014)

# Wales

- The situation in Wales is very different
- The number of female prisoners from Wales has increased
- In Wales, the number of women in prison has **increased** by 6.2% between May 2012 and December 2014
- From 242 (May 2012) to 257 (Dec 2014)

# Distances and Dispersal

	31-Dec-12	31-Mar-13	30-Jun-13	30-Sep-13	31-Dec-13	31-Mar-14	30-Jun-14	30-Sep-14	31-Dec-14
Askham Grange		<5		<5	<5	7	8	≤5	≤5
Bronzefield	<5	<5	<5	7	6	9	10	14	11
Downview	25	29	25	17					
Drake Hall	19	15	17	26	39	37	32	27	25
East Sutton Park	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	≤5	≤5	≤5
Eastwood Park	105	115	126	139	131	137	125	139	143
Foston Hall	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	5	6	6	≤5
Holloway	21	14	7	8	6	<5	9	≤5	≤5
Low Newton	<5	<5	<5	<5	7	6	6	6	6
New Hall	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	6	≤5	≤5	≤5
Peterborough (Female)	<5	<5	<5	5	<5	<5	≤5	≤5	≤5
Send	22	26	26	21	18	23	22	24	23
Styal	26	29	26	32	30	22	27	21	30
Total	235	246	246	268	256	260	254	260	257

- Distances a significant issue for the families of prisoners
- Impact on prison visits and maintenance of family contact

# Prison Visits

- Prison visits preferred means of maintaining contact (Murray, 2003)
- Importance for the maintenance of family contact (includes children)
- Important for prisoner resettlement outcomes upon release (Niven and Stewart, 2005; May et al, 2012)

# Distances

- Distances subject to “scant research” (Christian, 2005, p.31)
- Distances “main challenge” (Hudson, 2007, p. 112)
- Prisoners held less than an hour away from home are approximately nine times more likely to receive prison visits (Hudson, 2007)



# Experiences across Wales

- Distances present a range of problems
- Long and difficult journeys
- Cost
- Impact upon visiting levels
- Impact upon family relationships
- Impact upon children?

# Long Journeys

**Catrin:** If I go on the train I have to get a bus from mine to Caernarfon, change at Caernarfon to get to Bangor, get a train from Bangor to Chester, train from Chester to Moorfields, change at Moorfields to Fazarkerly then walk a mile from the train station to the prison... It's quite a trek.

**Lloyd:** Because when I was in Parkhurst my ex-wife she had to travel, she had to make her own way there. So I know she took the coach to wherever to get the ferry, she got the ferry to come across she had to spend the night on the island and then visit me the next day then come home. So two days in all for a visit, because it was so far. Plus the kids, she had to drag three kids with her as well.

# Cost

- **Henry:** And we did questionnaires and filled in all sorts of stuff and we found that the cost of a journey could be anything from £50 upwards, single person, to get from north west Wales into Liverpool, and if you're on benefits that is impossible.

**Mair:** At that time I wasn't getting many benefits I think I only had about £90 coming in a week, well by the time I have paid my gas and electric and everything else I had hardly any money left anyway. So trying to see him it was just a nightmare, but my son was sat in prison I didn't want him to be sat in prison I wanted to go and see him because I wanted him to know that we support him.

# Visiting Levels

**John:** Yeah, it was hard. I had them twice a week [when held in Wales] but I had to have it once a month then. I started having visits once a month because my family couldn't afford it an all that, because I have got a poor family.

**Jamie:** I didn't have a single visit in Stockton for over five months and yet I had received regular visits for over five years of prison before that, six years prison, before I went to that jail. When I went to that jail it was ridiculously far and my parent's health wasn't too well at the time and there is no way they can make that journey unless they flew and I went five months without a visit literally without seeing my parents.

- Experiences shared by David and LLoyd

# Relationships

**Wendy:** I think relationships deteriorate terribly you know for the younger ones where Mum and Dad would be visiting it's like 'oh my god I have been here all this time and my Mum has never visited'. And even though they do sort of understand, really I suppose they are the ones stuck there thinking 'maybe they could have made a bit of an effort' which does then have an effect on them when they come out. And even if they don't hold it against the parent or whoever, it is all that time without seeing that person.



# Distances a Disincentive

- Much research has been undertaken on prisoners' families and experiences of visiting
- E.g. security procedures
- Focus on “disincentives” (Brooks-Gordon and Bainham, 2004, p.266)
- Distances can clearly be seen as a major “disincentive”

# Women Prisoners from Wales

- Distances a huge problem
- How does this affect prisoners' relationships with children?
- How do children experience prison visits?

# Moving Forward

- Systematic data collection (e.g. Howard League)
- ‘Lack of concession’
- WG support for families e.g. North Wales Prison Bus
- Debate on alternatives to women’s imprisonment in Wales
- Wary of clumsiness
- Event on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015 in Ty Hywel

**Carol:** In fact my partner's children from a previous relationship, well his eldest daughter who is nineteen, she drove with her boyfriend from Llandrindod Wells to Liverpool and they had forgotten the actual paper visiting order and they would not let her in. Even though she had travelled like over three hours. So she got there they would not let her in, he's upset [prisoner] inside [and] she is in tears outside [daughter]. It's things like that where they know you have booked the visit you have got your ID with you it's just literally a piece of paper. And I found that there was a lot of that.

Thank you

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