

About Spurgeons Children's Charity

Spurgeons Children's Charity is one of the UK's leading children's charities, supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families for 150 years. As part of this, we aim to improve the lives of those affected by a parent being in prison.

Our prisoner and family support services across England allow children to visit their loved ones in a friendly environment and our mentoring and support programmes give young people the chance to reduce negative behaviours and build a better future.

Phone: 01933 412412

Email: info@spurgeons.org

Web: www.spurgeons.org

Prisoners' Families Helpline

Tel: 0808 808 2003

Web: www.prisonersfamilies.org

Help with Prison Visits

Address: PO Box 17594, Birmingham, B2 2QP

Tel: 0300 063 2100

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Email: HelpwithPrisonVisits@justice.gov.uk

Web: www.gov.uk/help-with-prison-visits

Email a prisoner

Web: www.emailaprisoner.com

Government information for visiting somebody in prison

Web: www.gov.uk/staying-in-touch-with-someone-in-prison/visiting-someone-in-prison

Parole board hearings

Web: www.gov.uk/leaving-prison

The Prison Advice & Care Trust (pact)

(a charity that provides practical and emotional support to prisoners' children, families, and to prisoners themselves)

Web: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

A guide to... Supporting a child with a parent in prison



What to say to the child

When their parent goes to prison, it's important to talk to the child about what's happening. They might be confused, sense something is happening, or they might even find out some other way.

Talk to them as soon as possible.

They may already know or suspect something is wrong. It's better that they hear it from you than someone unconnected with you.

Explain where their parent is and why.

Use language they will understand and that is appropriate for their age. Do not give them too much information in one go. Let them take in what you've said and be prepared to explain it more than once.

Reassure them.

Let them know they can ask questions and it's OK to talk about it. Let them know they are not to blame – children often think they are. Reassure them their parent is safe and that they'll be able to talk to or see them.

Listen to them.

But don't force them to talk if they don't want to. Just reassure them that you are there for them.

Offer them someone else to talk to.

Sometimes they might prefer to speak to a relative, friend or teacher rather than you. Let them know this is ok and who they can speak to.

Share your own feelings.

Talk to them about how you're feeling and let them know that it's ok to feel different emotions.

Don't paint the parent as a bad person.

Try to support a good relationship with their parent, even if this could be tough in some circumstances.

“Let them know they can ask questions and it's OK to talk about it. Let them know they are not to blame – children often think they are.”



Being a parent/carer

Looking after a child whose parent is in prison can be a difficult time for everyone involved. You have an important role to play in the child's life, as well as coping with your own feelings about the imprisonment. We hope our tips will help you better support the child or children in your care. Some things to think about are:

Let them know you are there for them.

It can be a difficult or frightening time. Children might be worried other things are going to happen. They might be relieved but afraid to say so. Let them know they have your support. Tell them that you understand.

Be prepared for unusual behaviour.

They might behave differently – they could be upset, angry, very quiet or not want to talk.

Treat each child individually.

If there are a number of children in the family, each one may react differently. Think about how they are individually affected and give those who need it extra support.

Think about talking to their school.

It's a good idea to let the school know what's happening so they can support you as a family through this time, especially if the child's behaviour changes at school.

Think about ways they can stay in touch with their parent.

In most circumstances, they can write, call or visit. Knowing they can see or speak to their parent will reassure them and help them keep a good relationship with them. Also keep the parent updated on what's happening at home or school. It's these everyday things that will be most missed.

Be mindful.

You may feel angry yourself about what's happened but don't confuse the child with this. They might think they're to blame. Keep as good a relationship as possible with their parent and try to agree on things.

