

Annual Conference Children of Prisoners Europe

On 16 May the Annual Conference of COPE (Children of Prisoners Europe) was held in Edinburgh and was attended by EuroPris Executive Director, Kirsten Hawlitschek.

The conference entitled "No-one's ever asked me" saw several NGOs presenting their work in this field. The conference highlighted the need to raise awareness on the significance of this issue, the limited provision which is currently available to assist children of detained persons in the criminal justice system and the need for research to evidence the effect that parental detention has to children. At the event the publication "Children of Imprisoned Parents European Perspectives on Good Practice" was launched. It features a range of initiatives, expertise and good practice.

Scotland

The Scottish Government confirmed that elements of its "Getting it right for every child" framework had now been enshrined in law:

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC): is an approach that ensures that *anyone* providing support to a child puts the child or young person – and their family – at the centre to decision making.

The *Getting it right* approach includes a *Named Person* for every child, from birth (or sometimes before), until they reach 18 that is responsible for their development and wellbeing and for coordinating support; it can start with a mid-wife through to child healthcare advisors through to school directors who will act as the one contact person.

England & Wales

Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT) is an independent UK charity that provides practical services for prisoners and prisoners' families. They work with 50 prisons and have set up the following support:

- Prison visit support services (visitor centre; supervised play; health lunch)
- Parenting Education
- Prison based case workers
- Practitioner training programmes

PACT believe it is important to involve children commissioners/children ombudsman to assist when lobbying for support from Government. They believe that for the children it is important that they can speak about their situation and to know that there are more children in the same position

Norway

Norway works with ambassadors in prison. FFP, a Norwegian NGO, organises dialogue meetings with children, prison staff and parents. They promote the need for children to be given a platform to speak about their experiences and support them to tell their stories at conferences and media events. FFP states a lack of information is an important issue and believes prisoners should be better informed on a wide range of issues including:

- number of pregnant women and babies in prison
- types of care arrangements for babies during imprisonment
- types of parenting interventions in prisons

- imprisoned parents lack access to information on how to parent/ how to educate babies/children
- at the stage of sentencing there should be a child impact assessment made (data collection and respecting the legal rights of the child)
- important aspects for the children and simple methods to help children:
 - physical contact
 - give space for one to one contact
 - opportunities for joint meals
 - give parents still a role as a parent
 - listen to the needs of the children
 - provide the opportunity to take pictures together that the children can take home
 - give children the opportunity to see where their parents live
 - tailor information to the needs and to the age of the children (information about visits, about the prison, about rules inside a prison and why they are there)