

Pan-European partnerships campaigning for the rights of children of prisoners remain strong in face of Brexit threat.

On any given day an estimated 2.1 million children across Europe are affected by the imprisonment of a parent. On Friday June 8th Manchester will welcome over 120 policy makers, subject experts and practitioners from across Europe to the 'Keeping Children Connected' Conference hosted by POPS and Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) to discuss the barriers facing children in staying in touch with their incarcerated parents and the impact of media attitudes towards prisoners' families.

Prisoners' families the 'golden thread' of prison reform

The conference will welcome as its keynote speaker conservative peer, Lord Farmer, author of the landmark Farmer Review which demonstrated the importance of good family relationships to prisoners' rehabilitation.

Research from the Ministry of Justice has shown that close ties between prisoners and key family members can significantly reduce the risk of reoffending - which costs society £15 billion every year.

The Farmer Review centred on a simple principle of reform: 'Relationships are fundamentally important if people are to change.' Lord Farmer described the importance of family ties as a 'golden thread' which should be woven through all prison policy and practice. The Farmer Review concluded that:

'Family work should always be seen and referred to alongside [employment and education] as the third leg of the stool that brings stability and structure to prisoners' lives.'

Diane Curry POPS CEO 'We welcome the opportunity to host in our great city of Manchester such a wealth of expertise from across Europe. Working together we hope to raise awareness of the impact of parental imprisonment and tackle media attitudes which often lead to further stigmatisation of this vulnerable group of children.'

Editor's Notes

- The 'Keeping Children Connected' conference takes place on **Friday the 8th June at Manchester Metropolitan University** (Geoffrey Manton Building).
- Speaker biographies attached as separate document.
- The Farmer Review 'Importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime' was published in 2017 and can be found at www.gov.uk.
- POPS is a user-led organisation providing support for offenders' families and their children throughout the criminal justice system and beyond. Find out more about the work we do to support offenders' families by visiting www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk or by following us on Twitter @POPSFamilies. Contact **Rebecca Cheung** rebeccac@partnersofprisoners.co.uk.
- COPE (Children of Prisoners Europe) is a European-wide initiative on behalf of children with an imprisoned parent. With our network of European partners active within prison-related, child's rights and child-welfare fields, we seek to boost awareness and achieve new ways of thinking, acting and interacting on issues concerning prisoners' children. Contact **Hannah Lynn** hannah.lynn@networkcope.eu.