



PRISONERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN CARE AS 'LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'

2015



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Róisín Broderick & James Carnie

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prevalence

Overall, over one quarter of those reporting (26%) indicated that during their up-bringing they had been in care at some point and one in six (16%) had been in care at the age of sixteen.

A third of young people in custody (33% n=109) reported being in care as a child and almost a quarter (24% n=73) were in care at the age of sixteen. Just over one quarter (26%) of female prisoners had been in care as a child and one fifth (21%) of those reporting in the survey were in care at the age of sixteen.

Custodial History

Prisoners who had been in care were most likely to report having been on remand between 1 and 5 times (39%), followed by 'over 10 times' (33%) and '6-10 times' (17%). Fewest respondents had 'never' been on remand (11%).

Young People's Custodial History

Young people in custody who had been in care were most likely to report having been on remand between 1 and 5 times (59%) compared with those who were not in care (55%), followed by having 'never' previously been on remand (25%) compared with (33%) for those who were not in the care system.

Drug use

Just over half of those prisoners who had been in care (53%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside, compared with three in ten prisoners (31%) who were never in the care system.

Of those prisoners who were in care as children (52%) were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence, compared with one third of all other prisoners (34%).

Almost a quarter committed their offence to get money for drugs (23%) and three in ten (29%) were receiving treatment for their drug use before prison, compared with prisoners who were not in care as children (13% and 16% respectively).

Young People's Drug Use

A higher percentage of young people who were in care as a child reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (51% compared to 42%).

Injected drugs in prison

One in ten prisoners who were in care reported that they had injected drugs in prison in the past (10% n=103) compared with other prisoners (4% n= 90).

Prescribed Methadone

Almost a quarter of prisoners who were in care (23% n=228) reported being prescribed methadone compared with 17% (n=311) of all other prisoners.

Alcohol use

Almost half of prisoners (45%) who had been in care as a child reported being drunk at the time of their offence, compared with 38% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Four in ten (40%) reported that drinking affected their relationship with their family, compared to 29% of those who had not been in care. In the region of one quarter of prisoners were assessed for alcohol use upon their admission to prison (27%) and had received help/treatment for alcohol problems during their sentence (24%).

Smoking

Eight in ten prisoners (85%) who had been in care as a child reported being a smoker, compared with seven in ten prisoners (68%) who were never in care as a child.

Mental health and well-being

Prisoners were asked questions on mental health through an instrument known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). Two thirds of prisoners who were in care as children reported dealing with problems well (68%) and feeling optimistic about the future (66%) compared with a higher percentage of those who were not in care (77% and 70%).

Knife Crime

Almost two thirds of prisoners who reported being in care as a child had carried a knife (63%) compared to four in ten of those who were not in the care system (39%). A significantly higher percentage of those who were in care reported using a knife to injure someone (50% compared with 27% of those who were not in care as children). Half had been convicted of a knife crime (50%) and received a Police caution (47%), which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (29% and 24% respectively).

Literacy and Numeracy

More prisoners who were in care indicated that they had problems with writing (20%), reading (18%) and numbers (13%) compared with other prisoners who were not in care (11%, 9% and 9% respectively).

Young People's Literacy and Numeracy

In the region of one fifth of young people in custody who had been in care reported that they had difficulty with writing (19%), reading (19%) numbers (17%) which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (15%, 13% and 15% respectively).

Introduction

This Bulletin, which deals specifically with prisoners who were ‘in care’ as children is one of a number of thematic commentaries presenting the key findings from the 2015 Prisoner Survey. The Prisoner Survey was introduced to the Scottish Prison Service in 1990 as a mechanism to inform and support the Service’s business planning process. The focus of the Survey has expanded over the years.

The report deals specifically with prisoners held in SPS custody who have indicated in their responses that they have been in care as a ‘looked after child’ at some point in their early developmental years. Questions on being in care as a child were originally included in the Prisoner Survey 2011 for the first time and the difficulty of capturing the detail and nuance of childhood experiences of the care system were recognised at the outset. To understand fully prisoners’ developmental issues and problems would require a dedicated survey in itself. However, within the space limitations of the eight page Prisoner Survey questionnaire, the following questions were asked:

- During your upbringing were you ever in care?
- Were you in care at the age of 16?
- If YES, which type of care?
- If you were in care, how many placements did you have e.g. foster families
- Were you ever:
 - Involved in a children’s panel
 - Expelled from school
 - Truant from school
 - Experience and problems at school

The Survey continues to focus upon the core elements of prison life: living conditions, family contact, healthcare, relationships, atmosphere and perceived safety. This year’s questionnaire also introduced other topics such as knife crime. The Survey informs and shapes change by contributing to establishment and corporate business plans.

The Survey was carried out between July and August 2015 on an establishment-by-establishment basis. Prisoners’ views were collected by means of a self-completion questionnaire, which was distributed and collected personally by the members of the Survey team or by local staff. The Survey involves all prisoners and all establishments.

The Fifteenth Survey achieved an overall prisoner response rate of 55%.

A total of 991 prisoners who had been in care during their childhood, participated in this Survey. Of those: 96% male, 4% female; 22% on remand, 78% sentenced.

Overall, over one quarter of those reporting (26%) indicated that during their up-bringing they had been in care at some point and 16% had been in care at the age of sixteen. A third (33%) of young people in custody had been in care at some point in their upbringing, illustrating the disruption and instability of the social backgrounds from which many of the young offender population originate. Just over a quarter (26%) of women in custody had been in care as a child and one fifth (21%) of females were in care at the age of sixteen.

Custodial History

Respondents' remand and custodial sentence history is outlined in Table 1. This shows that prisoners who had been in care were most likely to report having been on remand between 1 and 5 times (39%), followed by 'over 10 times' (33%) and '6-10 times' (17%). Fewest respondents had 'never' been on remand (11%).

Table 1. Prisoner in care as children 'Custodial History'	Never	1-5 times	6-10 times	Over 10 times
Number of times previously on remand	11	39	17	33
Number of times previously on a sentence	15	40	15	30

Young people in custody sentence history

Young people in custody who had been in care were most likely to report having been on remand between 1 and 5 times (59%) compared with those who were not in care (55%), followed by having 'never' previously been on remand (25%) compared with (33%) for those who were not in the care system.

Table 2. Young offenders in care as children 'Custodial History'	Never	1-5 times	6-10 times	Over 10 times
Number of times previously on remand	25	59	13	3
Number of times previously on a sentence	15	40	15	30

Young people's community sentencing

Although almost half of young offenders have served a sentence in the community (48% in care and 43% not in care) a greater number of those who were in care had received a custodial sentence as a result of breaching a community sentence compared to those who were not in care (34% and 29% respectively).

Drug use

Just over half of those prisoners who had been in care (53%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside, compared with three in ten prisoners (31%) who were never in the care system.

A similar number of those prisoners who were in care as children (52%) were under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence, compared with one third of all other prisoners (34%). Almost a quarter committed their offence to get money for drugs (23%) and three in ten (29%) were receiving treatment for their drug use before prison, compared with prisoners who were not in care as children (13% and 16% respectively).

Table 3. Drug use at time of offence	% prisoners In Care as children	% prisoners Not in Care
My drug taking was a problem for me on the outside	53	31
Under the influence of drugs at the time of my offence	52	34
I committed my offence to get money for drugs	23	13
I was receiving treatment for my drug use before prison	29	16

Young People's Drug Use

A slightly higher percentage of young offenders who were in care as a child reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (56% compared to 53%).

Half of those who were in care (51%) held the view that their drug taking was a problem for them on the outside compared with four in ten (42%) of those who had not been in care.

Table 4. Young Offenders (Under 21 Years of age) Drug use at time of offence	Under 21's In Care	Under 21's Not in Care
My drug taking was a problem for me ON THE OUTSIDE	51	42
I was under the influence of drugs at the time of my offence	56	53
I committed my offence to get money for drugs	16	20
I was receiving treatment for my drug use before my imprisonment	8	4

Injected drugs in prison

One in ten prisoners who were in care reported that they had injected drugs in prison in the past (10% n=103) compared with other prisoners (4% n= 90).

Prescribed Methadone

Almost a quarter of prisoners who were in care (23% n=228) reported being prescribed methadone compared with 17% (n=311) of all other prisoners.

Alcohol use

As shown in Table 5, prisoners were asked a number of questions about alcohol use/dependency inside and outside prison. Almost half of prisoners (45%) who had been in care as a child reported being drunk at the time of their offence, compared with 38% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey.

Four in ten (40%) reported that drinking affected their relationship with their family, compared to 29% of those who had not been in care. In the region of one quarter of prisoners were assessed for alcohol use upon their admission to prison (27%) and had received help/treatment for alcohol problems during their sentence (24%).

Table 5. Prisoners views on Alcohol	% prisoners In Care as children	% prisoners Not in Care
I was drunk at the time of my offence	45	38
My drinking affected my ability to hold down a job	23	17
My drinking affected my relationship with my family	40	29
If I was offered help in prison for alcohol problem I would take it	41	34
If I was offered help on the outside for alcohol problems I would take it	39	34
I am worried that alcohol will be a problem for me when I get out	22	16
Have you used alcohol in prison in the last month	5(n=51)	5(n=100)
I was assessed for alcohol use on my admission to prison	27	25
I have been given the chance to receive treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	24	24
I have received help/treatment for alcohol problems during my sentence	16	21

Smoking

Eight in ten prisoners (85%) who had been in care as a child reported being a smoker, compared with seven in ten prisoners (68%) who were never in care as a child.

Mental health and well-being

Prisoners were asked questions on mental health through an instrument known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) (See Table 7). Two thirds of prisoners who were in care as children reported dealing with problems well (68%) and feeling optimistic about the future (66%) compared with a higher percentage of those who were not in care (77% and 70%). Overall those who were in care reported less positively than those who were not in care (Table 7).

Table 7. Mental health & well-being: comparison of 'positive ratings' 2011	% prisoners In Care as children	% prisoners Not In Care
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	66	70
I've been feeling useful	57	64
I've been feeling relaxed	62	71
I've been feeling interested in other people	47	57
I've had energy to spare	63	69
I've been dealing with problems well	68	77
I've been thinking clearly	71	80
I've been feeling good about myself	61	69
I've been feeling close to other people	46	56
I've been feeling confident	63	70
I've been able to make up my own mind	81	87
I've been feeling loved	51	58
I've been interested in new things	61	69
I've been feeling cheerful	60	69

Young people's mental health and well-being

Young people in custody also were asked questions on mental health by way of an instrument known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) (see Table 8). Overall those young offenders who were in the Care system as children reported less positively in relation to their mental health and how they felt in general.

Table 8. Young Offenders (Under 21 years) Mental health & well-being	Under 21's In Care	Under 21's Not in Care
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	69	76
I've been feeling useful	62	68
I've been feeling relaxed	56	75
I've been feeling interested in other people	53	40
I've had energy to spare	71	76
I've been dealing with problems well	80	76
I've been thinking clearly	81	75
I've been feeling good about myself	68	69
I've been feeling close to other people	54	58
I've been feeling confident	67	74
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	87	90
I've been feeling loved	48	64
I've been interested in new things	73	75
I've been feeling cheerful	55	66

Knife Crime

Almost two thirds of prisoners who reported being in care as a child had carried a knife (63%) compared to four in ten of those who were not in the care system (39%).

A significantly higher percentage of those who were in care reported using a knife to injure someone (50% compared with 27% of those who were not in care as children). Half had been convicted of a knife crime (50%) and received a Police caution (47%) which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (29% and 24% respectively).

Table 9. Knife crime	% In Care	% Not in Care
Have you ever carried a knife?	63	39
Have you carried a knife in the 12 months before coming into prison?	32	19
Have you been a victim of knife crime?	51	30
Have you ever used a knife to injure someone?	50	27
Have you ever been cautioned by the Police for carrying a knife?	47	24
Have you ever been convicted of a knife crime?	50	29
If you were cautioned for carrying a knife would this stop you? Yes?	36	41
Are you a gang member? Yes?	15	7

Domestic Violence

Almost two thirds of those who were in care as a child (64%) reported witnessing violence between their parents/carers, compared with just over one third of those who were not in care (36%). Just over a quarter of prisoners who were in care as a child (27%) reported they had been involved in violence towards their spouse or partner, with 17% saying they had been convicted of an offence involving violence towards their spouse or partner which is higher than those who were not in care (20% and 17% respectively). One third of those in care (33%) had been a victim of violence from their spouse or partner compared with a quarter (25%) of those who were not in care as a child.

Young People's Domestic Violence

Although there is no difference between those in care or not in care regarding being involved in violence towards their spouse or partner ('In care' 13% compared to 13% 'not in care'), there is a significant difference regarding those young offenders who as a child witnessed violence between their parents/carer ('In care' 55% compared with 'not in care' 31%).

Literacy and Numeracy

More prisoners who were in care indicated that they had problems with writing (20%), reading (18%) and numbers (13%) compared with other prisoners who were not in care (11%, 9% and 9% respectively).

Young People's Literacy and Numeracy

In the region of one fifth of young offenders who had been in care reported that they had difficulty with writing (19%), reading (19%) numbers (17%) which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (15%, 13% and 15% respectively).

Conclusion

A sizeable proportion of prisoners disclosed that they had been in care as a child. Over one quarter of those reporting (26% in 2015; 27% in 2013) indicated that during their up-bringing they had been in care at some point and 16% had been in care at the age of sixteen (17% in 2013).

A third of young people in custody (33%) reported being in care as a child which is consistent with previous surveys (30% in 2013; 37% in 2011). When mental health and drug and alcohol misuse are analysed, more prisoners who have been 'looked after as children' present with problems. Positive scores for mental well-being were generally lower across the range of indicators for those who declared themselves to have been in care at some point in their childhood.

Just over half of those prisoners who had been in care (53%) reported that drug taking was a problem for them on the outside, compared with three in ten prisoners (31%) who were never in the care system (2013 figures, 48% and 30% respectively).

Almost half of prisoners (45%) who had been in care as a child reported being drunk at the time of their offence, compared with 38% of all other prisoners reporting in the survey (2013 figures, 51% and 43% respectively).

Overall, drug and alcohol problems were more prevalent in those who had been in care at some point in their youth.

Almost two thirds of prisoners who reported being in care as a child had carried a knife (63%) compared to four in ten of those who were not in the care system (39%).

A significantly higher percentage of those who were in care reported using a knife to injure someone (50% compared with 27% of those who were not in care as children).

Half had been convicted of a knife crime (50%) and received a Police caution (47%) which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (29% and 24% respectively).

Almost two thirds of those who were in care as a child (64%) reported witnessing violence between their parents/carers, compared with just over one third of those who were not in care (36%) (2013 figures, 62% and 34% respectively).

More prisoners who were in care indicated that they had problems with writing (20%), reading (18%) and numbers (13%) compared with other prisoners who were not in care (11%, 9% and 9% respectively).

In the region of one fifth of young people in custody who had been in care reported that they had difficulty with writing (19%), reading (19%) numbers (17%) which is higher when compared to those who were not in care (15%, 13% and 15% respectively).