

CHILDREN'S CONTACT WITH IMPRISONED FATHERS AND THE FATHER CHILD
RELATIONSHIP AFTER RELEASE

CHILDREN'S CONTACT WITH IMPRISONED FATHERS AND THE FATHER CHILD
RELATIONSHIP AFTER RELEASE: AN INTERACTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper investigates the influence of children's contact with their father during his prison sentence on the father child relationship after his release. It is based on a mixed method prospective longitudinal study of 40 families in England where fathers had played an active role in their children's lives prior to his imprisonment. Drawing on an interactional perspective of relationships (Hinde, 1976) the study found that face to face contact and phone calls correlated significantly with the child father relationship after the father's release as reported by both parents. Written contact played less of a role. The longitudinal correlations remained significant after controlling for the level of the father's involvement with his children before imprisonment. The quantitative findings were supported by qualitative data from the mothers, fathers and children which illustrated how contact enabled the father-child relationship to continue through the facilitation of familiar interactions (physical comfort, emotional support, discipline, guidance) even if, in a limited and altered form. These findings suggest that contact as a form of interaction between father and child is important for protecting the child-father relationship during and after the prison sentence.

Keywords: paternal imprisonment, contact, father-child relationships.

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Introduction

When a father is sentenced to prison his children are often vulnerable (Murray et al, 2012a; Murray et al 2012b). They may suffer from anxiety and depression associated with the separation (Murray & Murray, 2010) and become socially isolated through actual or perceived stigmatisation (Boswell, 2002). They may also have lost an importance source of care, support, discipline and a valued play companion (Lamb, 2010) and be at increased risk of behavioural problems compared with children of non-imprisoned parents (Murray et al., 2012a; 2012b). If the father has contributed to the household income, his absence may lead to accommodation and financial difficulties (Murray & Farrington, 2008).

Where there has been an active and close relationship prior to the father's imprisonment, research suggests that is to the advantage of both the father and child to preserve the relationship during the prison sentence. A high level and quality of involvement on the part of the father has been found to be beneficial for children's development (Lamb, 2004). There is also a substantial body of literature which indicates that children and families play an important role in prisoner resettlement and desistance (Niven & Stewart, 2005; May et al, 2008;).

However, many studies have highlighted the difficulties of maintaining family relationships during a prison sentence (Farida, 1992; Peart & Asquith, 1992; Richards et al., 1994; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). The father-child relationship after prison may also be characterised by an increased fragility; the nature and make up of prisoners' intimate family ties vary and relationships are often complex (Paylor & Smith, 1994, Hairston, 1995) but it is likely that the quality of relationship between parent and child will have changed to some extent as a consequence of the period of separation. Children

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will have grown older and become accustomed to a daily routine in which the parent featured only marginally, if at all. They may have to adapt to a new mode of interacting with their father following release. Anxiety resulting from the experience of the separation may remain and the child's perception of their parent may have been altered and be negatively associated with feelings of stigma (Boswell 2002).

Whether this fragility is heightened or reduced may depend on how the child copes with the father's absence. Within this context, the amount and quality of family contact during imprisonment may play an important role. Contact between imprisoned parents and their children is however limited by the prison authorities and often by geography (Christian 2005; Clarke et al, 2005) and that which takes place is subject to the terms and conditions of individual prison regimes. In the UK all contact between fathers and families can be made through 'ordinary' visits, phone calls and letters. Ordinary visits typically last 1.5 to 2 hours and require the family and prisoner to remain seated opposite each other at a table. Some prisons offer 'children' or 'family visits' to some prisoners which allow greater flexibility for family interaction. Some prisons also provide email contact and initiatives such as 'Storybook Dads' where fathers can send recordings of their stories to their children. These services are not available however to all fathers in all prisons. A child's communication with their father will also be dependent on the support and help of other adults in their family (often their mother or carer) or from support agencies.

Literature on the effects of parent-child contact during a prison sentence

There is not much research on the effects of contact on prisoners' children and what there is reports mixed findings. Some studies have highlighted its value for

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sustaining family relationships (e.g., Carlson & Cervera, 1991; Hairston, 1991; Smith, 2003; La Vigne et al., 2005,) and little or no contact is associated with disrupted family bonds (Hairston, 1991; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010; Edin et al., 2004). Whereas such findings suggested positive outcomes for children after contact (e.g. reduced anxiety and fewer behaviour problems) other studies observed increased behavioural problems, expressions of insecure attachment and negative visiting experiences (see Murray, 2005; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010).

From a methodological perspective these studies are primarily based on data provided by one or other of the child's parents or caregivers or other adults, such as teachers. There is very little research which captures the children's views directly (for an exception see Boswell, 2002). Much of this research is also cross-sectional and offers a perspective of the father-child relationship during the time of the imprisonment. Less is known about the cumulative impact of contact but what there is suggests an overall positive influence: La Vigne et al's (2005) longitudinal survey research of 233 prisoners in the US found that greater in-prison contact with the children predicted father's stronger attachment to his children after release (measured in terms of the frequency of father's involvement in various activities with his children).

An Interactional Model of Relationships

A potentially illuminating perspective for understanding the cumulative effects of contact is offered by an interactional model of relationships which presents the interactions between two people as 'the building blocks' of their relationship (Hinde 1976, 1979; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). From this perspective relationships involve 'a

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series of interactions in time' and each interaction affects the future direction of the relationship even if it is only to maintain the status quo: *'any stability that a relationship has is dynamic in nature'* (Hinde, 1976:4). By inference a lack of contact will increase its fragility.

Interaction theory states that how people interact within a relationship will be influenced by their previous interactions, their expectations and goals and how these expectations relate to their perceptions of the reality of the relationship. Fathers and children will in this way *'continually add to and reorganize their relationship based on their ongoing interactions and their ongoing attempts to understand these interactions'* (Lollis, 2003:68). Thus the father child relationship is *'a product of and a context for'* father-child interactions (Kucynski et al, 2003: 421). Their interactions before his prison sentence will therefore be of relevance to understanding their interactions in the present. It follows also that their relationship after the prison sentence will have been influenced by their interactions whilst he was in prison.

However, interactions are indicative only of the continuation of a relationship they do not specify a particular content, goal or 'end state'. To understand a relationship, Hinde argues, it is necessary to understand *'the content and quality of interactions'* as well as how these interactions *'are patterned in time'* (1976: 4). Parent child relationships are uniquely complex because the relationship *'simultaneously incorporates a variety of competing functions such as authority, security caregiving and intimacy'* (Kuczynski, 2003: 8). These relationships are also subject to the social norms and the wider socio-cultural context in which they take place (Hinde, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The already complex interactions within a father child relationship will in this way be influenced by the fact and conditions of the father's prison sentence (see also

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Poehlmann et al. 2010, Clarke et al, 2005). The nature of the father and child contact as well as the frequency of contact will be important therefore for understanding its potential influence on the father child relationship after release.

The current study investigates this assumption empirically. It adopted a mixed method prospective longitudinal design to explore the cumulative influence of children's contact with their fathers imprisoned in the UK and the role contact plays in the continuation of father-child relationships after his return to the community. It presents a multi-informant perspective with data provided by fathers, mothers and children.

The Research

Sample

40 families (40 fathers, 40 mothers and 69 children) took part in this study. As no records are kept of fathers in prison in the UK, the research team spoke to men in 13 prisons in London and the East of England who met the sentence length and release data criteria to ascertain if they were fathers eligible to participate in the study. Fathers were also identified via visiting centres and parenting initiatives in prison. Partners and ex-partners were contacted subsequently to ask if they and their children would be willing to participate.

The selection criteria were fathers who had sentence lengths of up to 6 years (not related to sex or harassment offences), were due for release within four months and who had children under 18 years with whom they had direct contact and were planning to maintain contact on release. As a group therefore these were men who had to some degree or other an 'active' fathering role in relation to their children. The average length of time the fathers had spent in prison was two years four months ($SD = 16$ months) with a range from six months to five years six months. As a group they

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were broadly comparable to national characteristics of the male prison population according to age (Prison Reform Trust, 2009) and offence type (Berman, 2011).

However, due to the relatively small sample size, necessary eligibility criteria and a lack of official statistics on the families of imprisoned fathers, we cannot say for certain how representative the group is with regard to the respective population.

The majority of fathers and mothers (83%) described themselves as in a relationship together and between 53 – 62 % were living together (there was a slight discrepancy between the mothers' and fathers' reports on this issue). Nineteen of the 40 families had one child, 16 had two children, two families had three and three families had four. The 69 children who were included at both stages of the research ranged in age from a few months to 18 years. The mean average age was six years; 33 were male, 36 were female. The large majority, 54, were White British, seven were of mixed race, six were Black British one was Asian/Asian British and one was Gypsy/Traveller. All the children except one lived with their mother during the father's imprisonment.

One-to-one semi-structured interviews, were held with the fathers, mothers and 35 children from the age of 4 at two time points: the first within the last four months before the father's release from prison (Time 1), the second within six months after release (Time 2). For the present analysis, the Time 1 interviews collected qualitative and quantitative data on the father's involvement with the children before his imprisonment and the type, frequency and problems of contact between the family during the prison sentence. At Time 2 fathers and mothers were asked for their views of the children's relationship with the father following his release from prison. The children and young people were asked about their feelings and reactions to their

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father's return. Their views strengthened confidence in the accuracy of the parents' reports and were an important data source for the analysis of the role of in-prison contact.

Quantitative Analysis

The first stage of the data analysis investigated a potential statistical link between the frequency of different forms of in-prison contact and the father-child relationship after his release.

A measure of *the children's relationship with the father after prison* was the dependent variable for the analysis. This was formed by combining the father's and mother's views of the quality of the father child relationship. Each parent was asked how good the father's relationship was with each child on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = 'not at all good' and 5 = 'extremely good'.

Six independent variables measured the frequency of contact during the prison sentence:

Prison Visits Two measures of face-to-face contact were developed. Fathers and mothers were asked about the frequency of ordinary prison visits and the frequency of children/ family visits on a scale where 0 = *Never*, 1 = *irregular contact*, 2 = *less often than monthly*, 3 = *monthly*, 4 = *fortnightly*, 5 = *weekly*, 6 = *more than once a week*. The score from both parents were averaged to form this measure.

Phone calls This measure was taken from parents' combined assessments of the frequency of children's phone calls with the father. The scale range was 0 = *Never*, 1 = *irregular contact*, 2 = *less often than monthly*, 3 = *monthly*, 4 = *fortnightly*, 5 = *weekly*, 6 = *more than once a week*, 7 = *daily*, 8 = *more than once a day*.

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Written contact Three measures of written contact were taken from parents' combined assessment of the frequency of the father's communication with the children by letter, email and story tape. The scale range was 0 = 'Never' to 8= 'More than once a day'.

To investigate whether in-prison contact had an independent influence on the father child relationship, as an interactional model of relationships would suggest, we developed a control measure of the intensity of *the father's interactions with the children before his imprisonment*. This measure consisted of the combined reports of the mother and father on the father's level of involvement with his children in the following areas: daily care, discipline, play, school work (where applicable) and decisions about the children. Parents' responses were recorded on a 5-point scale where 1= 'Never' and 5 = 'Always'. Mothers' and fathers' scores correlated at $r = .48$ ($p < .01$) and were averaged to provide a multiple-informant measure.

The measures of children and family visits, communication via email and story tapes were not included in the inferential tests. As these forms of communication were relatively rare and not accessible to all the families in the sample they were used for descriptive purposes only. Further only statistical data on children aged 4 years and above at the time of the first interview were included in the correlational analyses. This was because we had interview data from children from this age. Their personal reflections on their past, present and future relationship with their father allowed for a more informed interpretation of the statistical results than if data on the infants and toddlers had also been included.

Qualitative analysis

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In addition to these quantitative indicators qualitative data were used to explore the nature and function of contact with the father in prison. These data were drawn from interviews with the fathers, children and mothers during and after his time in prison. The coding scheme for the qualitative data was developed inductively by the research team using a consensus-based approach. Participants' responses were coded independently by two members of the research team using NVivo. Where differences of opinion existed, a resolution was agreed through discussion.

Findings

The father child relationship before and after prison

Across the sample the father's involvement in his children's lives before prison was rated fairly highly by both parents. On a range of 1 to 5 the mean score for his overall involvement was $M = 3.92$ ($SD = 0.81$). The more specific scores were $M = 4.07$ ($SD = 0.92$) for play, $M = 3.82$ ($SD = 1.12$) for involvement in daily care, $M = 3.73$ ($SD = 1.06$) for discipline, $M = 3.70$ ($SD = 1.16$) for decision making, and $M = 3.43$ ($SD = 1.23$) for helping with school work (where applicable). The children's accounts supported these assessments. In response to the question: 'What was it like at home when Dad was around?' 31 of the 35 children (89%) interviewed described the time positively. Play and leisure activities featured frequently in their comments: *"I used to swim with dad every week"* (Kayleigh, 7); *"It was fun when dad was around – he took us to the park, played games"* (Sara, 10); *"(It was) fun. We used to play fight"* (Alex, 13). Some children mentioned the support and guidance Dad provided: *"He's been there for me and brought me up"* (Josh, 13); *"He makes us feel like his kids"* (Kwesi, 18); *"Dad used to support me at football matches"* (Lydia, 8). The few negative comments related to situations where the

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father did not spend much time with them or to his alcohol problems: *"When he's not drinking, he's a normal dad. When he's drinking he's a stranger"* (Ben, 11).

Many families resumed the living arrangements they had before the father went to prison, but there were a few changes: two fathers moved to live with the mother and children, two fathers moved out and one father lived with the family part-time. Two fathers were back in prison, affecting four of the children interviewed, and two others were prevented from moving back with their children because of their licence conditions. Parents' ratings of the child's relationship with the father after his release were mainly positive ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.87$). For 4 children (6%) the relationship was rated as 'negative', for 12 (19%) as 'somewhat good' and for 53 (77%) as 'very or extremely good'. The children's comments were also favourable: 26 of the children interviewed described their relationship with their father as unconditionally positive: *"Very very happy"* (Tom, 7); *"All's good. Back to normal now"* (Julia, 18); *"I am not as upset or angry as I used to be"* (Sara, 10); *"We're all happier now that dad is around"* (Kwesi, 18).

Six children had mixed comments and three children described the relationship in completely negative terms. The children who expressed negative views included one boy did not want to visit his stepfather who was back in prison: *"Because of what he's done to my mum"* (Josh, 13). Other children said they felt displaced and forgotten: *"When dad is back I get bored. He sleeps in mummy's bed"* (Steven, 7); *"He doesn't play with me much. He tells me off quite a lot"* (Laura, 7). Other young people were ashamed of their father's behaviour since his release because of his alcohol problems.

Type and Intensity of Family Contact During The Prison Sentence

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Table 1 shows the average amount of contact between fathers and children while he was in prison. Telephone calls were the most frequent method of contact. Fathers and children spoke on the phone "*more than once a week*" on average. Contact by letters was the second most frequent form of contact: fathers and children exchanged letters approximately "*monthly*". Emails and taped stories were irregular forms of contact. Children saw their fathers on ordinary visits '*less than once a month*' on average. Child and family visits were irregular forms of contact. Children, family visits, emails and taped stories were not an option in all prisons or for all prisoners, so many families scored 'zero' for these forms of contact.

- *Insert Table 1 here* -

Contact during the prison sentence and the father child relationship after his release from prison

We calculated bivariate correlations (Pearson's '*r*') between the various measures of contact and the father child relationship after release. Here the individual child was the main unit of analysis. Although this strategy gives more weight to families with several children we chose it because there was variation in the contact and relationship scores for children within each family. However, we have also reported the results giving each family a 'weighting' (e.g. 0.5 for families with two children) and the findings are similar (see Table 2). The analyses revealed positive and significant associations between ordinary visits and phone calls and the child father relationship post release. There was no association with letter writing.

- *Insert Table 2 about here* -

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To investigate the relative influence of in-prison contact and pre-prison interactions between the father and child on the father child relationship post release we calculated partial correlations that controlled for the father's pre-prison involvement with the children (see Table 2). When the level of father's pre-prison involvement with his children was controlled, the correlations between the contact variables and the post-release father-child relationship measure were a little lower than the uncorrected coefficients however, they remained significant and substantial. The results were similar for the visits and phone calls. As before, communication by letter writing did not correlate with the child father relationship on release.

Families' Perceptions of Contact

To understand the nature and extent of the influence of in-prison contact between father and child, we gathered unstructured narratives from the fathers, mothers and children in the interviews. Their comments illustrated the positive emotional impact of direct contact by visit and by phone and the roles the father was able to maintain in the relationship. They also indicated barriers to the communication between father and child and the negative effects of a lack of contact.

The majority of children and fathers in the study spoke of the importance of direct interaction during the prison sentence: "*Seeing him makes me feel really happy*" (daughter); "*To hear his voice, it makes the sentence bearable to have a relationship*" (father). Keeping in touch enabled the father to maintain a presence emotionally and psychologically. It provided an opportunity for him to stay up to date with the children's daily lives and for them to share their daily experiences with him: "*I talk to him every fortnight. He says 'how are you doing?' and I tell him about school.*" Contact was also

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important for stemming children's anxieties about the father's absence: *"The children calmed down when they knew they'd see him every week"* (mother). Although it was acknowledged to have been difficult, some fathers said they had a limited opportunity to maintain other aspects of their role as a parent by offering advice to the children and supporting the partner with discipline and decisions *"they need some response because they don't always listen to (their mother)"*, *"I get a say in things but not as much as when outside"*.

Although children's and family visits were much less frequent than regular visits (see Table 1), they were particularly welcomed. During such visits fathers were able to play with their children and be close physically: *"The children's visits really let you get close to them and play with them."* These visits engendered a sense of family and allowed the father to resume his role within the family *"I like it when he doesn't have to wear the red vest because he's like my dad, not like a prisoner"*, *"I feel like I can be more of a father in visits"*.

The family's comments illustrated how environmental conditions and the parents' relationship affected the interactions between the father and child. The conditions of imprisonment presented practical challenges to communication: letters took a long time to arrive, phone calls were expensive and in some prisons telephone facilities were minimal: *'there's only 4 phones for 120 inmates'*, *'you can wait hours to get on the phone and he's not in or he's had a bad day or has no time to talk'* *'I always ask after them, but usually only speak to them about once a week, as I don't have enough phone credit otherwise'*. Other practical barriers related to travelling with young children and the distance and cost of travelling to the prison: *"I spent £42 on trying to get through to visits (on the phone) and £50 for the last visit"* (mother). One mother and her four children travelled several hours to a prison for a visit and waited for two hours at the gate before being told that

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the father had been transferred to a different prison the day before. Another family were refused access because one child's name was not on the visits' list.

The conditions under which contact was allowed to take place could also impede natural interaction. There were time limits placed on some phone calls: *"you are only allowed 7.5 minutes per call"*. The awareness of being monitored could be inhibiting: *"Phone calls are monitored and recorded... We're always careful what we say. We're terrified of jeopardizing when I'm coming out"*. The prison could be an intimidating and frustrating place to visit: children spoke of being afraid of the dogs sniffing them and being bored at having to wait for a long time. The regulations associated with ordinary visits could be particularly discouraging: *"Children ... get told off for leaving the table by the officers"*; *"If you get too close they come and move you. He's not allowed to get off his chair"* (mother); *"I don't see them much just twice a month for two hours. I can't get up and walk around. There's no relationship"* (father). Some fathers felt their relationships with the children had become more precarious as a consequence of their imprisonment. Their desire for interactions when they did have contact to be positive could lead to hesitancy over the discussion of less popular topics: *"You don't want to upset them."*

The ending of visits in particular was difficult for both fathers and children: *"Finishing visits is very bad and the walking away is painful"* (father); *"I don't like leaving"* (Leah, 16). One mother, Karyn, had deliberately restricted her children's contact with their father because she felt they had found it too upsetting: *"Prison upset (them) and I didn't know whether it was best to take (them) or not"*. There were indications here that limited contact during the father's sentence was linked to a more fragile and unstable father child relationship afterwards. After their father's release Karyn said that her children were particularly anxious: *"Their emotions went funny: getting upset over things they wouldn't used to get upset over. Always crying when leaving Dad."* Another mother

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described the consequences of the father's transfer to a prison further away which had prevented the children from visiting him: *"It was better when they could visit him more. When he moved further away they weren't able to visit. Their behaviour got worse even though they spoke to him on the phone. So visiting was very important, even normal visits".* After the father was released, she said it took the children a little time to adjust: *"He's been out about five months. It took about three months to get fully used to it. He had to build up a relationship with all of them, spending time with them individually and as a family."*

Discussion

The family members' comments about their experiences of contact offer a valuable contextual insights. They illustrate how phone calls and visits in particular enable many fathers and children to maintain some familiarity of interaction through the prison sentence. Phone calls were important as a conversational form of communication for keeping up to date with the child's day-to-day life (Nixon et al, 2012) and face-to-face contact was 'a key way of conveying the family-like nature of relationships' (Davies 2011:21). The visits also enabled some continuity in the fathers' function as companion and role model as emphasized by Lamb (2010).

Parents' comments about the consequences of a lack of contact were informative. They support the findings from the partial correlations that contact plays an active role in maintaining the father-child relationship and suggest that 'relationship entropy' can occur if this contact is not maintained. The children and father's comments also illustrate how the *quality* of the interaction opportunities matters but that the full potential of contact interactions are not fully achieved because of restrictions of prison regulations and environments. These findings resonate with those of Clarke et al

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(2005) who reported that fathers in prison perceived a deterioration in the closeness with their child as a consequence of the adverse conditions of contact (see also Dixey & Woodall, 2011). The children's comments further indicate how the impact of positive interactions during prison sentence may be overshadowed by other more powerful and immediate influences on the father-child relationship after release.

The findings from this study align well with an 'interactional perspective' of relationships for they illustrate how contact between the child and father during the prison sentence makes an active contribution to the continuation of the relationship on his release. As in La Vigne et al's (2005) research, the cumulative contribution of contact in this study was largely a positive one. This is neither implicit in an interactional model of relationships nor is necessarily true for all imprisoned fathers and their children. However, because a key criterion for the families participating in this study was contact between the fathers and children, these were families for whom keeping in touch was at least to some degree important. The phone calls and visits thus enabled fathers and children to maintain, if to a limited extent, valued modes of interaction.

For this reason it is plausible that the average frequencies for the various forms of contact for these families are not low. There are no national statistics on the frequency of different forms of contact between fathers and their children in the UK. However, broadly similar levels of contact between fathers and their children were reported in a sample of 43 fathers in research by Clarke et al. (2005) although their frequency measure did not differentiate beyond 'monthly or more'. Poehlmann et al.'s (2010) review of research on family contact with parents in prison in the US suggests that levels of contact by mail appear to be similar to the present study, but much lower levels of contact by phone and visits are recorded. The frequency of family contact in the

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US is however, likely to be affected by the very different rates and conditions of imprisonment in the US in comparison to the UK.

The current study is one of very few attempts to investigate the impact of contact between imprisoned fathers and their families in a longitudinal design. A further strength of the research is its multiple-informant approach, gathering data not only from the men but also the children and mothers. The most important finding of the study is that contact and the child father relationship post-release correlated not only at the bivariate level but also when the pre-prison quality of father's involvement with the child was controlled for. The control of relevant third variables is necessary to increase the validity of longitudinal correlations (e.g. Murray, Farrington & Eisner, 2009), although this does not yet allow causal conclusions. Several of the partial correlations remained significant and thus support the assumption that contact intensity may indeed have an independent protective effect.

In spite of the limited time frame and a majority of rather positive family relations in the present sample the findings have clear implications for practice. As family contact had an independent impact on the father child relationship after release, social policy and practice should support as much contact as possible. Our qualitative data showed that the majority of families in the study desired there to be more contact than they were able to have. For these families contact was an important protective factor for children's continuing relationship with their father. The families' experiences of the barriers to and facilitators of meaningful communication resonate with other studies (e.g. Dixey and Woodall, 2011; Christian 2005). In the UK, services and conditions for contact between families in many prisons have improved (Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Pugh, 2004). However, provision still varies significantly from prison to prison and much of this is dependent on the work of small charities and other agencies

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within the voluntary sector. There is scope to embed and extend opportunities for family contact more systematically within prison regimes and to provide greater support for prisoners' families. A closer working relationship between criminal justice, social and child welfare professionals and an increased range of contact opportunities which make use of visual internet technologies, for example, would be beneficial to this end. Such initiatives would be in line with Article 8 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) which protects children's rights to direct and regular access to a separated parent.

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Table 1: Frequency of contact between fathers and children during father's prison sentence

Type of Contact	Children ^a <i>M (SD)</i>
Ordinary Visits ^b	2.09 (1.80)
Children and Family ^b Visits	.88 (1.10)
Telephone calls ^c	5.68 (1.91)
Letters ^c	3.09 (1.94)
Email ^c	.07 (.44)
Storybook Dads ^c	.52 (.46)

M = Mean SD = Standard Deviation. *Note.* ^aChildren's amount of contact with father reported from the mother's and father's combined perspective. ^bScale range was 0 = Never, 1 = irregular contact, 2 = less often than monthly, 3 = monthly, 4 = fortnightly, 5 = weekly, 6 = More than once a week. ^cScale range was 0 = Never, 1 = irregular contact, 2 = less often than monthly, 3 = monthly, 4 = fortnightly, 5 = weekly, 6 = more than once a week, 7 = daily, 8 = more than once a day.

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Table 2

Raw and partial correlations (Pearson's *r*) between father child contact during the father's prison sentence and the child-father relationship after his release.

Type of Contact	Child-father relationship	Child/Father relationship controlled for prior father involvement
Children's 'ordinary visits'	.51*** (.48*) ^b	.46*** (.46*) ^d
Children's phone calls with father	.51*** (.53**) ^b	.38* ^c (.42*) ^d
Frequency of letters between father and child	.12 ^a (.03) ^b	-.01 ^c (-.06) ^d

Note. **p*<0.05 ***p*<.01 Children aged 4 – 18 years. Figures in brackets are weighted by

family. ^a n=45 children ^b n=24 families ^cn= 42 children ^d n=21 families.