



**Quaker Peace &  
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for European  
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# **Women in Prison and the Children of Imprisoned Mothers**

## **A briefing for Friends**

**Women in Prison Project Group  
August 2007**

# **Women in Prison and the Children of Imprisoned Mothers: A briefing for Friends**

## **Contents**

<b>Women in Prison: a summary</b>	<b>page 3</b>
<b>Introduction to this briefing</b>	<b>page 4</b>
<b>The major issues</b>	<b>page 5</b>
<b>Creating change</b>	<b>page 16</b>
<b>Taking action</b>	<b>page 18</b>
<b>Resources &amp; contacts</b>	<b>page 21</b>
<b>About the Women in Prison Project</b>	<b>page 24</b>

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## **Women in Prison: a summary**

*"Women and men are different. Equal treatment of men and women does not result in equal outcomes."* (Corston Report)

Men and women are alike subjected to imprisonment but little consideration has been given to the different needs and problems of imprisoned women as opposed to those of men. This omission may reflect the fact that women prisoners are a very small minority of the overall prison population: only four percent worldwide. Throughout the world, prison regimes are almost invariably designed for the majority male prison population and therefore do not provide for the needs of women.

Women prisoners' physical, mental and emotional needs differ from those of men. Prisons may be unable to offer adequate maternity and ante-natal care, or appropriate access to feminine hygiene products. Women can have different needs relating to problems such as substance addiction, mental health, anger management, a history of psychological, physical or sexual abuse.

Female prisoners have a higher rate of mental illness and are more likely to have been victims of physical and sexual abuse than the general population and are at higher risk of self-harm and suicide. They may respond differently to security regimes and require less harsh forms of physical restraint. In mixed-sex prisons the security regime may be disproportionately harsher for women because it is designed for men.

Most women in prison are mothers and/or the main carer for children, thus it is particularly important that ways be found of helping them to maintain family ties. The rights of the children of women who are imprisoned are also an important consideration.

Research shows that custodial sentences are not appropriate for many women nor effective in reducing offending or reoffending. The experience of imprisonment can have damaging effects for both mothers and their children and can exacerbate mental health issues or problematic drug or alcohol addiction among women in prison.

We do not ignore the needs of men in prison: our focus is on women in prison because they, and their children, have been generally neglected by researchers and governments.

We hope this work will lead to further research and to more positive and sensitive government attention worldwide for women offenders and women likely to offend.

**Women in Prison Project Group  
August 2007**

# Introduction to this briefing

## Quakers' concern

Quakers have been involved in issues of criminal justice and conditions for most of the 350 years of our existence. The belief that God is in every individual prompts us to see criminals as human beings with dignity and rights and to care for their welfare no matter what their crimes. We do not believe that anyone is outside God's love. Crime is an area where both forgiveness and justice are needed.

The long-standing Quaker involvement in criminal justice and human rights issues at the national, regional and international levels has led to increasing concern about the under-considered and growing problem of women in prison and the situation of children of imprisoned mothers. We share the concern that prison is an inappropriate place for many women because (a) women are not so dangerous as to warrant this level of security, and (b) they are often in need of types of help and support that even the best equipped prison is unable or unsuited to provide.

This particular piece of work, the Women in Prison Project, is a joint venture by four Quaker bodies. Our goals are to bring about changes which mean:

- fewer women are imprisoned
- harm to children of imprisoned mothers is reduced as much as feasible
- treatment of women in prison is improved as much as possible
- the rights of children of imprisoned mothers are respected at all stages of the criminal justice process

The purpose of this briefing is to inform you and encourage and help you to be part of achieving these changes.

## The briefing

This briefing highlights the needs of women prisoners and the damaging effects of prison and pre-trial detention on women and their children around the world. It also tells you how to keep in touch with work of the Women in Prison Project and suggests ways in which you can contribute to changing things for the better.

It is difficult to summarise conditions for women prisoners worldwide when they vary so much from one country to another. The information here is taken from accurate sources of research: mostly our own. It reflects the general picture in prisons throughout the world in order to give readers an overview of the particular problems and needs of all women in prison. **Not all conditions and practices apply in all countries. Readers are encouraged to verify for themselves the extent to which the issues we raise apply in their own countries.**

This Quaker project is international and it is intended that this briefing will be too. Written initially for Quakers in Britain, we hope users will translate it into other languages and add their own country-specific resources.

# **Women in prison and the children of imprisoned mothers – the major issues**

This section gives outlines only of the major issues affecting women in prison and their children worldwide. There is an inevitable overlap between many of the issues. More information about all aspects, including national situations, conditions and opportunities in individual countries, and 'good practice' is available from Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva. See *Resources & Contacts* on page 21.

## **A Arrest**

Police officers may not ask whether the person they are arresting has children or allow them time to explain to the children what is happening or make arrangements for their care. This increases the anxiety of both children and mothers and makes the arrest more difficult for the officer.

## **B Pre-trial detention**

Women may be more likely to be placed in pre-trial detention than men. This is because on the indicators used to determine a person's likelihood of absconding before trial (such as secure employment and owning or renting property in one's own name) women tend to come out lower. Factors such as caring responsibilities are not taken into account.

Even if a woman is acquitted at trial, she may have lost her job, her home or her place on mental health or drug rehabilitation programmes in the meantime. For children, having a mother placed in pre-trial detention has many of the same effects as having a mother imprisoned following conviction.

## **C Sentencing**

Despite their statistically small proportion in the overall prison population, the rate of imprisonment of women is increasing rapidly. The reasons for this appear to be changes in sentencing policy and law enforcement priorities, rather than a change in the amount or severity of crime in which women are involved.

### **Severity of sentence**

Attitudes towards 'women criminals' may lead to harsher sentences, including imprisonment for offences for which men would not be imprisoned. Some discrimination against women reflects the social culture rather than specifically the criminal justice system: thus contravening social *mores* may lead to women being criminalised.

### **Type of crime**

In most countries, women are in prison for non-violent, property or drug offences. Generally, women have a lower involvement in serious violence, criminal damage and professional crime.

### **Length of sentence**

In many countries, a relatively high proportion of female prisoners appear to serve fairly short prison sentences. It should be borne in mind that a short sentence, for example six months, may be just as disruptive as a longer sentence for a woman prisoner, who may lose her children, her job, and her home as a result of the sentence.

## **D Prisons**

The number, type, geographical location and distribution of national prisons will affect the quality of womens' imprisonment. The provision in a country is usually a practical matter of the resources available, and also reflects the penal philosophy of that country. Some factors are outlined below.

### **Location**

Because there are fewer female prisoners there are fewer single-sex prisons for women. Women who are held in single-sex prisons are therefore more likely to be held long distances from their families and communities than men, making visiting and the maintenance of family ties more difficult. This is especially problematic for women who were the sole carers of dependent children before their imprisonment. It also affects other specific categories of female prisoners, such as juveniles, whose numbers are even smaller.

### **Level of security**

Levels of security in prison are generally put in place to stop men escaping, which may mean that prisons are disproportionately harsher for women. In addition, the smaller number of women's prisons compared to men's means that there is less opportunity to provide institutions of different security classifications. The prisons' regimes will be determined by the maximum security requirement, meaning that many women will be held according to a security classification that is stricter than could be justified by any assessment of the risk that they pose.

### **Shared facilities**

Women with diverse needs and a history of offending may be inappropriately held together under the same security regime. Sometimes women awaiting trial are held with women who have been sentenced, which is contrary to best practice. Women who are detained in prisons which also hold men may be required to share facilities and attend classes with male prisoners. This may not be a suitable environment for women who have experienced abuse or require strict separation from men.

## **Overcrowding**

Prisons may be overcrowded and offer reduced exercise facilities, and time spent out of cells. This pressure may also reduce the numbers of available rehabilitative programmes – educational, vocational, counselling – as well as of drug and alcohol dependency programmes.

## **Education, training and work**

Prisons may offer a range of educational and work opportunities – compulsory work or voluntary work (either paid or unpaid). In single-sex prisons where there are few women, access to education, training and work opportunities may be severely limited. In mixed-sex prisons women may be required to attend classes or work with male prisoners. This may be unsuitable and even threatening for some women.

In some countries, women prisoners are given traditionally feminine jobs, such as catering or sewing. This is not a problem if there is a market for such skills outside the prison but jobs should not be allocated simply because of the gender of the prisoner. Women whose children live with them in prison may not be able to work or take education courses if there are no childcare facilities.

Opportunities for prisoners awaiting trial and sentenced prisoners may also differ significantly.

## **E Physical health & health care**

### **General health and health care**

Women prisoners suffer poor physical and mental health at rates and with a severity far exceeding those of male prisoners or of women in the general population. Some of this may be related to the reasons why they have been imprisoned, for example drug use and hence drug dependency and associated health problems. Sexual abuse and exploitation of women before and during imprisonment can lead to gynaecological problems, HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases, pregnancy, child-birth or abortion.

### **Disease in prisons**

Diseases and infections associated with overcrowding and poor health and hygiene conditions such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, are additional risks for women in prisons.

### **Drug & alcohol addiction**

Prisoners are more likely to suffer from drug/alcohol addiction than in the community at large. Existing research indicates that 75% of women entering European prisons are problematic drug and alcohol users and that women prisoners are more likely to be addicted to harder drugs than male prisoners.

## **Health care provision**

Standards of medical care within prisons vary greatly both from country to country and from prison to prison. When health care facilities are outside the prison they may offer better standards of provision, but they may create other problems such as:

- The shame and discomfort for women of being taken there in prison clothing or in handcuffs, particularly if they have to wait in public areas within the hospital.
- Shortages of prison staff reducing the availability of escorts for women to attend hospital.
- Male prison staff accompanying female prisoners and being present during medical consultations and examinations.
- Perceived lack of security in civilian institutions leading to women being shackled to beds, even during child-birth.

## **Sexual health**

Universally HIV among women prisoners is higher than in the general population. HIV positive women risk passing the disease onto their babies and unborn children. Women's high rates of drug addiction expose them to the risk of catching HIV through sharing needles.

## **Female health & hygiene**

The prison may not provide for the sanitary needs of women or women may have to pay for their own sanitary provision.

Women who are menstruating or going through the menopause need regular daily showers. It is humiliating for women to have to use washing and toilet facilities in the presence of others, most particularly during menstruation. They should also be able to change their bed linen frequently.

Older women may go through the menopause while imprisoned, and their medical and/or psychological needs need to be identified and met at this time. They may also have particular health care needs such as hormone replacement therapy or food supplements.

## **Pregnancy and childbirth**

Pregnant women prisoners require specialised resources and attention in respect of diet, exercise, clothing, medication and medical care.

Prison is not an easy place to be pregnant and the inflexibility of a prison regime is incompatible with the needs and care of a pregnant body.

- It is more difficult to catch up on missed sleep and missed meals and hard to take baths or showers as often as needed.



- It may be difficult for the prison to transport prisoners to health care checks and scans, ante-natal classes and post-natal care.
- Ante-natal and post-natal care may not be seen as medical priorities by poorly resourced and security-conscious prison staff.
- It may be difficult for a prisoner to see a midwife.
- Alerting staff to a medical problem, even the onset of labour, may be difficult, particularly at night.
- The stress of imprisonment can have a deleterious effect on the progression of a pregnancy.
- Restraining pregnant women in the same way as other women prisoners may endanger both the woman and the fetus.

## **F Mental health**

Mental health problems are far more prevalent among women prisoners than in the male prison population or in the general population. Many have lower-level mental health problems, such as personality disorder, which do not qualify them for a psychiatric bed. Women may need access to treatments and therapy designed specifically for them, and even in women-only prisons conditions may not be ideal. Women can be extremely worried about what will happen to their children, especially in the early stages of detention. Research has suggested that this can exacerbate or bring on mental health problems.

### **Depression, self-harm and suicide**

Doctors are more likely to diagnose depression in women than in men (even when they have similar scores on standardised measures of depression) and more likely to prescribe mood altering psychotropic drugs to women than to men. Outside prison men are more likely to commit suicide than women but the position is reversed inside prison, and self-harm in prison is a huge problem and more prevalent among women in prison.

## **G Violence and vulnerability**

In those countries where all prisoners are vulnerable to torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, women (and juvenile female) prisoners are particularly at risk, both from male prisoners and from male prison guards. The power imbalance between prisoners and guards together with the closed nature of prisons provide opportunities for harassment, exploitation, abuse, prostitution, rape and indecent assault of female prisoners by staff, both male and female. They may also be subjected to abuse and exploitation from other prisoners, both male and female.

Even in countries where this is not the case, such as in the UK, women prisoners are vulnerable to other prisoners. A high proportion of UK women prisoners state that they feel unsafe.

The issues about safety and security of female prisoners include:

- Location of female cells in mixed prisons.
- Location and use of shared facilities, in particular showers and toilets.
- Whether male prison guards hold 'contact positions' over female prisoners (posts which permit or require them to be in physical proximity to the prisoners, sometimes unsupervised by other, female, staff).
- Strip searches: women prisoners as a group are more likely than other women generally and/or male prisoners to have experienced sexual assault: this makes strip-searching especially traumatic for them.
- The existence or lack of effective supervision and complaints mechanisms which enable prisoners to complain without exposing them to intimidation or further abuse – for example, seeing a doctor in the presence of guards means that violence towards and abuse of prisoners by guards is less likely to be reported by the prisoner.
- Women who are subject to sexual abuse or exploitation face the added problems relating to the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, the questions of pregnancy and child-birth or abortion, and all the associated physical, mental and emotional health issues.

## **H Mothers in prison**

Most women in prison around the world are mothers. Women are more likely than men to be the sole or primary carer for children and this factor makes the prison experience significantly different for women. The effects of maternal imprisonment on their families are generally more disruptive than the effects of paternal imprisonment. This is not adequately recognised by the criminal justice system.

Because the number of women sent to prison is relatively low, and because of the apparently increasing tendency to send women to prison for lesser, non-violent offences, the woman herself may not anticipate the possibility of imprisonment as the outcome of her trial. She may not, therefore, have made any preparations or provision for her children before being taken into custody. This can cause added distress to both the mother and the children, and indeed may leave children fending for themselves.

## **Prison visits from children**

Visiting prisons can be a daunting and frustrating experience. Traveling a long distance, entering a grim building, being searched by a strange adult, to spend a short time in a harsh adult environment with a mother that one might not even be able to touch may be extremely distressing to a child. This in turn may make the child's carer less inclined to undertake this arduous task, as well as leaving the mother distraught and reluctant to have further visits from the child.

Furthermore, the new carers may have their own family responsibilities, as well as financial constraints, which put strains on taking in additional children (leading to children moving from one carer to another) and in particular adding to the financial, time and emotional burdens of taking children to visit their imprisoned mother.

Evidence suggests that the children of imprisoned mothers, and particularly those who are taken into state care during the mother's imprisonment, are at significantly greater risk of developing criminal behaviour in adulthood than other children.

## **I Children of imprisoned mothers**

The rights and best interests of the children of women prisoners are rarely considered during criminal justice processes, even though parental imprisonment has a major impact on their lives. There are three options:

- The child has to go to prison with the mother, and the consequence of that.
- The child is separated from the mother, and the consequence of that.
- Where there is more than one child and they are treated differently; i.e. one goes to prison with the mother, the other is separated, and the consequences of that.

Within each of these, there are then a number of matters to be considered which are encapsulated in the table overleaf.

<b>Children imprisoned with their mothers</b>	<b>Children separated from their mothers</b>	<b>Children split from their siblings as a result of the mother's imprisonment<sup>1</sup></b>
How the child's rights are considered in sentencing a mother		
How decisions are taken about whether babies and young children accompany their mother into prison (or pre-trial detention)		
The effect of imprisonment on the child	The effect of separation on the child	The effect of separation from siblings
The facilities provided in prison	The accommodation and care provided to the child	The effect of being treated differently from siblings
How to handle later separation if necessary	The impact on the child of the loss of contact with the mother	
How the child will adapt to life 'on the outside' after release of the mother or after separation	The impact on the child of visits to the prison	
Depending on the age of the child, the loss of friends and the loss of contact with other members of the family	The stigma attached to being the child of a prisoner	
Alternatives to, and different forms of, imprisonment that better support motherhood and child development		
The impact imprisonment and/or separation has on the child's education and general development		

<sup>1</sup> Only the additional issues are listed here; the others apply as per the first two columns depending on which side the child is on.

### **Children separated from their mother**

Children left in the community may be looked after by their father, grandparents, other relatives or friends of the family, taken into state care or left without carers. Siblings may be separated from each other in order to lighten the burden of care, or they may be taken into State institutions. How can the mental, emotional, physical and social impact of the mother's imprisonment be minimised for the children, both directly for them in continuing their daily lives, and also in maintaining their relationship with the mother during imprisonment and following her release (if any)?

A prisoner living in insecure or rented accommodation will usually lose this when s/he enters prison and getting accommodation when released is often difficult. A mother whose children have been placed in the care of the state or another person usually cannot reclaim custody without appropriate accommodation, so even a short prison term may lead to permanent separation of families.

Registering details of prisoners' children is not part of the reception procedure in many countries. Some prisoners may not disclose this information voluntarily for fear that their children will be permanently taken away from them. As a result, governments do not make social provision or policies which address the problem of children with incarcerated parents.

The impact of their mother's imprisonment on the children affects every aspect of their lives and not only their relationship with their mother. It is similar to bereavement, but with added stigma and often less support, from the new carer, teachers, and others. Children of imprisoned parents have an increased tendency to exhibit aggressive and anti-social behaviour compared to the general population.

Researchers have found that the effects of parental imprisonment can be serious. Studies of prisoners' children consistently report that children experience a range of psychosocial problems during the imprisonment of a parent, including: depression, hyperactivity, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, regression, clinging behaviour, sleep problems, eating problems, running away, truancy, poor school grades and delinquency. The impact on the children will, of course, vary according to their age, surrounding family and community response, environment and individual character.

### **Babies and children in prison**

Some women may spend part or all of a pregnancy in prison and give birth while still serving their sentence. The bonding of an infant with her/his primary carer is essential for her/his long term emotional development and should be given high priority. If mothers give birth while serving their sentence, or are imprisoned when they have a baby or young child, that baby or young child may come into the prison to live with them. Special resources and facilities available to mother and babies in prison varies, but usually consist of accommodation within a specialised Mother and Baby Unit (MBU). Toys are sometimes provided for the children and the mother may have more freedom in terms of staying in an unlocked room, having access to a kitchen in which she can prepare food for the child etc.

Because of the small number of women in prison who have children living with them, the number of MBUs is low, meaning that a mother may be imprisoned a long way from the rest of her family. This creates problems regarding prison visits and maintaining contact with any older children in the family. Additional concerns about babies and children living in prison are the effect this has on their development – physical, mental and emotional.

How long babies or young children can reside in prison with their mothers – or even whether they can do so at all – varies considerably across countries. The separation of mother and child can be a very traumatic experience for them both. Some countries try and make the separation process as gradual as possible, in order to ease the pain and trauma of separation.

Babies and young children who are living in prison with their mother also require specialised health care. Women who know that their children will be removed from them shortly after birth may exhibit mental health problems and/or reject the baby or fail to bond with it.

## **J Maintaining links with family**

When imprisoned mothers are the primary carer of children, separation from their mothers is usually more traumatic than if the father is incarcerated; this is of course much worse where the mother is the sole carer. Research has shown that if family ties are maintained, the chances of prisoners re-offending upon release are lowered, so it is important to take measures to try to preserve these ties. Problems in maintaining these links include:

- Doing so through letters is hard for those with low literacy skills, and self-evidently problematic in relation to young children.
- Overcoming what is often a greater distance between the woman and her family.

## **K Specific groups of prisoners.**

### **Foreign nationals**

Foreign national women prisoners may be either resident or non-resident in the country where they are imprisoned. Common difficulties may be faced by both male and female foreign national prisoners, such as problems relating to language and misunderstandings surrounding the customs and cultures of the host country, which may lead to isolation. In prisons where the prisoners are dependent on external assistance, whether for basics such as food, hygiene products and clothing, or for small luxuries, women without family at hand to visit not only face the direct problems of not having such items, but are vulnerable to exploitation by other prisoners or prison guards in order to obtain the necessities for survival.

Foreign national women who are not resident in the country of imprisonment may often be very far away from their children and families, causing them anguish and anxiety. Their children may not have the financial means to come and visit them. Telephone calls may be prohibitively expensive for both the mother and her children and difficult to arrange because of time differences. If the children are too young to read and write, then communication via letters is not an option.

Many women foreign nationals in prison are there for drug smuggling and may have left their children in the temporary care of friends or family, expecting to return in a few days. Imprisonment may put a woman's family (children and others) in significant danger from the people who employed her to smuggle drugs. Resident foreign national women can face deportation when they have completed their sentence, which means further separation from their families, or their having to relocate as well.

### **Transgender prisoners**

Transgender prisoners face particular difficulties and pose special challenges to the prison system precisely because of the question as to their classification as male or female prisoners.

### **Racial minorities/ indigenous prisoners**

In many countries with indigenous populations, indigenous women represent the fastest growing segment of the prison population. Their “double minority” status within the prison system, being both indigenous and women, means that where training and other programmes exist they may have to choose between those intended for indigenous men or for non-indigenous women. They may also have different needs from other women prisoners.

## **L Post-release issues**

Women leaving prison receive varying degrees of support from the prison and social services. They may face many problems in addition to the pressures which may have caused them to commit their initial crime, such as: getting a job, finding accommodation, staying drug or alcohol free and regaining custody of children who have been in state care during their imprisonment. Even a short prison term may lead to the mother losing the rented accommodation in which she had been living, and it is common for a mother to be unable to regain custody of her children if she does not have anywhere to live. This makes it very difficult for women to resume normal lives outside of prison, and may be a factor which contributes to re-offending.

Although all released prisoners face issues surrounding their efforts to reintegrate into society, for parents these may be compounded by the need to reconcile with children who may have changed (as well as grown up) during their absence. These children may have taken on new roles in the family and developed close relationships with alternative carers, both of which can cause tension if the returning parent tries to go back to ‘the way things were’. Re-offending by parents can also have a devastating impact on their children, as they lose their parent for a second time.

# Creating change

## A Changes to prison conditions and sentencing practices

What is a solution in one country is not necessarily right in another. Nevertheless there is a growing body of internationally recognised basic principles to govern these matters becoming enshrined in international law such as:

- the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and other international juvenile and criminal justice standards;
- human rights standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- standards and mechanisms within the Inter-American and African human rights systems;
- the European Prison Rules, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU), the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

All of these provide frameworks in which to lobby & campaign for change in your own country and at international level.

## B Alternatives to prison & pre-trial detention

There is also a strong argument for considering alternatives to imprisonment and pre-trial detention for women. These include non-custodial community service sentences and restorative justice approaches. The growth and development of restorative justice processes and practices throughout the world show that there are more effective ways of meeting the needs of victims, offenders and the community than the traditional criminal court systems. For example:

- Development and use of community-based penalties for mothers of young children to avoid the use of prison custody.
- Recognition that custody for pregnant women and mothers of young children should only ever be used as a last resort for those women who represent a danger to the community.
- Family group conferencing and circle sentencing: by enabling victims, the women offenders, their families and the community to meet and agree both on how best to repair the harm and on how to re-integrate the offenders into society and support their children, the outcomes are more likely to stop further offending and reduce the possibility of their children in turn becoming offenders.



## **C How change can happen**

Change can happen by affecting the legal framework at home and abroad. That is, changing the laws and rules which determine:

- Under what circumstances women are placed in pre-trial detention.
- What kind of sentence is given to women offenders.
- How women are treated in prison.
- Whether the needs and best interests of the children of imprisoned mothers are taken into account.

This can require:

- Changing the existing laws, and/or
- Seeing that existing laws are properly implemented.

Ways of achieving this include:

- Gathering information on the issues and on good practice.
- Monitoring implementation of laws and regulations.
- Lobbying policy makers.
- Campaigning.

# Taking action

## A Information and research

QCEA has undertaken significant research into the conditions for women in prison and their children in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

- *You can read them all on the QCEA website or ask QCEA for copies.*

QUNO has produced reports on the conditions of women in prison, pre-trial detention of women, and the effect this has on their children.

- *You can read them all on the QUNO website or ask QUNO for copies.*

There may be information and reports available in your country, published by governments, charities or other non-governmental organisations.

- *Keep looking at local (country-specific) sources of information.*

## B Lobbying policy makers

**QUNO has raised issues around women in prison and children of imprisoned mothers with the United Nations Treaty Bodies** (the committees which review how well countries are living up to their human rights obligations) and Special Procedures (independent experts working on specific human rights issues). The Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, in turn, have raised these issues with countries and included them in their reports.

- *You can read the reports and Concluding Observations of these bodies on the Office of the United National High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) website ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)).*
- *If you have information or particular concerns about the situation in your country, check with QUNO when your country is due to report to any of the Treaty Bodies so that it can be submitted. QUNO can help you make the submission.*
- *Some UN human rights bodies visit prisons in different countries. If you are able to provide information or relevant contacts, please contact QUNO.*

**QUNO's gender commentary on the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners** should be published in 2008, and includes materials from the European, Inter-American and African Human Rights systems. This will enable Friends and others to draw issues to the attention of Government and prison officials, legislators, and others.

- *Keep in touch with QUNO to find out the date of the publication and how you can make use of it.*

**Development of a gender critique of the revised European Prison Rules in 2006:** QCEA has lobbied the governments of a selected number of the member states of the Council of Europe to try to get some of our recommendations included in the next revision or in an annex to these rules. The next opportunity for involvement would be either the next review or the agreement of an Annex to the European Prison Rules, although neither expected within the next 18 months.

- *You can keep in touch with QCEA to see what is happening.*

**The promotion of a motion for a recommendation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** which (after some hard lobbying which Friends assisted with in a targeted campaign) has led to the call for a full report on the issues raised in QCEA's report to the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly. When this report receives attention in several of the Committees of the Parliamentary Assembly prior to it being submitted to the Standing Committee, and when it is debated in the Standing Committee (and potentially in the full Parliamentary Assembly), further targeted lobbying by Friends will be necessary to ensure the necessary level of support to obtain a decision which recommends to the Committee of Ministers that this issue should be addressed by them.

- *QCEA welcomes contact from Friends now, who would be willing to be called upon to do this at the appropriate time.*

**Engagement with Members of the European Parliament** who are now taking this issue on board and compiling their own report into the question of women in prison and their children. Given that prison issues are not a matter for the European Union, but one for Member States, there is still a question about where this might lead. Nonetheless, a resolution of the European Parliament in line with some of our recommendations would be helpful for future lobbying at national level in EU Member States.

- *To get involved in targeted lobbying at the appropriate time contact QCEA.*

## **C Prison visits**

QCEA is visiting prisons in various European countries to observe conditions for ourselves, speaking to staff and prisoners and touring accommodation, classrooms, recreation facilities, etc.

- *You can read QCEA's findings on their website.*

Do you know anyone who has been in prison who could tell us about life inside, or who works in prisons or with ex-prisoners or their families? Or who has interest in these issues at an academic or policy level? Do you have any contacts in other countries? Could you liaise with a prison for us or know anyone who could?

- *Please tell QCEA or QUNO if you can give us any of this information.*

## **D Alternatives to prison & pre-trial detention**

QUNO's paper on pre-trial detention includes some details on alternatives to detention.

- *You can read it on the QUNO website or ask QUNO for copies.*

And QCEA is now undertaking detailed research into alternatives to prison in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

- *Contact QCEA or QUNO if you would like to contribute expertise, knowledge and experience on these issues or to be involved in QCEA's project in any way.*

## **E Good Practice**

The Women in Prison Project Group is particularly interested in hearing examples of good practice within the criminal justice system which could be applied elsewhere.

- *Please send any examples of good practice to QCEA, QUNO or QPSW.*

## **Resources & contacts**

### **A Women in Prison Project publications**

Full lists of QUNO and QCEA publications are on their respective websites: this is a selection.

*Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers: Preliminary Research Paper.* Rachel Taylor. July 2004 (QUNO)

*Babies and Small Children Residing in Prisons.* M. Alejos. March 2005 (QUNO) (also available in French and Spanish)

*European Prison Rules: A Gender Critique* Charlotte Wetton. March 2006 (QCEA)

*Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers: Recent Developments in the United Nations Human Rights Systems* Laurel Townhead. April 2006 (QUNO) (also available in French and Spanish)

*Pre-trial Detention of Women and its impact on their children* .Laurel Townhead. February 2007 (QUNO) (also available in French and Spanish)

*The impact of parental imprisonment on children* by Oliver Robertson, April 2007 (QUNO) (also available in French and Spanish)

*Women in Prison: Part 1 – A Review of the Conditions in Member States of the Council of Europe* 2007 (QCEA)

*Women in Prison: Part 2 – Country Reports* 2007 (QCEA)

These are available individually, comprising reports on:

Denmark

Estonia

France

Germany

Ireland

Italy

Latvia

Norway

Romania

Russia

Scotland

Sweden

United Kingdom – England and Wales

## **B Women in Prison Project contacts**

### **Quaker Council for European Affairs**

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Website: [www.quaker.org/qcea](http://www.quaker.org/qcea)

### **Quaker Peace & Social Witness**

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Fax: 020 7663 1001

General e-mail: [paulah@quaker.org.uk](mailto:paulah@quaker.org.uk)

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### **Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva**

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### **Friends World Committee for Consultation World Office**

173 Euston Road

London NW1 2AX

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Fax: +44 207 663 1189

General e-mail: [world@fwcc.quaker.org](mailto:world@fwcc.quaker.org)

Website: [www.fwccworld.org](http://www.fwccworld.org)

## **C Country-specific resources: UK**

### **Publications**

*The Corston Report: A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system* March 2007 Home Office ISBN 978-1-847226-177-9

Website: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/)

*Poverty and disadvantage among prisoners' families.* Rose Smith, Roger Grimshaw, Renee Romeo and Martin Knapp. Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2007. Website: [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

*Women in prison in Scotland: an unmet commitment.* A Briefing Paper of the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice. July 2006.

Website: [www.scccj.org.uk](http://www.scccj.org.uk)

### **Organisations**

#### **Fawcett Society**

1-3 Berry Street , London EC1V 0AA

Tel: 020 7253 2598

Fax: 020 7253 2599

Website: [www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)

#### **The Howard League for Penal Reform**

1 Ardleigh Road, London N1 4HS

Tel: 020 7249 7373

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Website: [www.howardleague.org](http://www.howardleague.org)

#### **Prison Reform Trust**

15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR

Tel: 020 7251 5070

Fax: 020 7251 5076

General e-mail: [prt@prisonreformtrust.org.uk](mailto:prt@prisonreformtrust.org.uk)

Website:[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)

#### **SmartJustice for Women**

15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0LR

Tel: 020 7689 7734.

General e-mail: [info@smartjustice.org](mailto:info@smartjustice.org)

Website: [www.smartjustice.org/indexwomen.html](http://www.smartjustice.org/indexwomen.html)

#### **Women in Prison**

1a Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2EA

Tel: 020 7226 5879

Fax: 020 7354 8005

Website: [www.womeninprison.org.uk](http://www.womeninprison.org.uk)

## **About the Women in Prison Project**

"In general, prison regimes are devised for male prisoners and tend to ignore the particular problems of women prisoners who are a small (though growing) proportion of people held in prison.

(a) Because of their smaller numbers, there tends to be a lack of rehabilitation and training programmes and health care specifically for women's needs.

(b) A large majority of women in prison have one or more children under 16 years old for whom they are the primary carers, so that these children suffer as a result of their mother's imprisonment.

(c) Due to the small number of prisons for women, they tend to be imprisoned further from their homes and visiting arrangements are more difficult for the families of women prisoners than for men.

(d) Proportionate to the need, there are far too few resources for pregnant and nursing women prisoners; for instance, prison places in which babies can remain with their mothers.

(e) The number of women who are imprisoned is rising, and part of the increase is due to women being held in foreign countries who have been coerced or deceived into carrying drugs.

All of these problems are exacerbated for women who are held in custody awaiting trial, often for long periods of time."

*From: Statement made on behalf of Friends World Committee for Consultation at the 12th Meeting of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Commission, 13-22 May 2003.*

The Women in Prison Project is an international joint venture by four Quaker bodies. The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva, and the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in Brussels have, since 2004, been undertaking research on Women in Prison and the Children of Imprisoned Mothers as part of a joint project together with Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) in Britain, and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) representation to the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the United Nations Crime Congress.

The project aims to gain a clearer understanding of the particular problems faced by women prisoners and children of imprisoned mothers and how these problems can be better addressed by governments and policy makers.