# Insights from prison research with mothers

Does a prison-based social worker help where there are child welfare concerns?



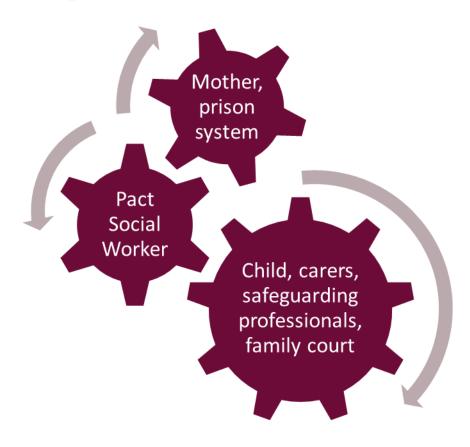
**Charlotte Waits** 

with Professor Alyson Rees and Zoe Bezeczky



## Social workers for mothers in prison pilot

- Approximately 310,000 children in England and Wales each year are affected by the imprisonment of a parent.
- Lord Farmer's review (2019) recommended having a social worker based in women's prisons.
- Pilot project led by prison charity Pact at HMP Send and HMP Eastwood Park.
- Prison-based social worker aims to support mothers where there are child welfare concerns.







## 3-year evaluation 2021 to 2023: data sources

94 mothers

19 prison staff

2 prison-based social workers

2 prison observations

https://twitter.com/HmpSend

22 community practitioners

4 children / carers

2 key informants





#### The mothers and their families

- 94 mothers originating from 56 local authorities.
- 249 children linked to the mothers.
- 101 children's social workers allocated.
- 29% reported social services involvement as a child, compared to 1.15% across UK.
- Most were single or separated and 63% of siblings were separated.
- 46% reported no contact with their children at referral.
- 48% were in legal proceedings relating to their children, or needed legal assistance.







### Do prison-based social workers make a difference?

- Complex work and it differs in each prison.
- High level of satisfaction from mothers (91%) significant given mistrust of social workers.
- Contact issues were resolved for 88% of the mothers where this was an issue (68% had a contact plan; 20% were supported with no contact in the child's best interest).
- Increased utilisation of the Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) at HMP Eastwood Park.
- Prison-based social workers play a significant role in supporting mothers identified as being at risk of self-harm (35%) concerns often related to children.
- Prison staff report being upskilled in "the legal landscape".
- Community practitioners report children being more settled.
- Policy makers are interested Government (MoJ/HMPSS) has taken over funding prison-based social workers and extended the pilot.







