

## Release and Resettlement: Family Concerns

### **I'm worried that s/he will offend again and go back to prison. Is there anything I can do to help stop this happening?**

Be as supportive as possible, and talk to each other about the fears and temptations that arise, and how you will deal with them together. If alcohol or drugs are involved the person may need to get extra support from a drug or alcohol agency. If there are financial problems or debts, talk them through with the National Debtline or local CAB and get

### **Will prison have changed my family member's behaviour?**

Everyone is different, so there are no hard and fast answers to this question, but prison can have an effect on a person's behaviour and moods for some time after release, although usually the changes are temporary, while they are re-adjusting to life on the outside.

In our experience of working with families, the kind of issues that come up after a family member has returned home include:

Becoming more controlling or possessive than before, not wanting to let their partner out of their sight, always wanting to know where they are going, and who with.

Being obsessively tidy, having been expected to keep cells spotless during their time inside

Difficulty making decisions about everyday things like what time to go to bed, what to eat for lunch, etc

Finding it hard to cope with noisy children or social gatherings

### **What difficulties might I face when he/she comes home?**

The relationship is unlikely to be exactly as it was before the person went away. Both of you will have changed through separate experiences. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The person on the outside may have gained in confidence as they have got used to doing things, eg paying bills, looking after children, going out alone, since the prisoner was not available to do it, or to help out. The person who was in prison may have tackled their offending behaviour – done a course in anger management or come off drugs, for example. Even when the changes are positive, though, it can change the dynamics of the household and people will find that some readjustment is necessary. The kind of things a family may need to deal with at this time include:

Adjusting to living with another person when they had got used to having the house to themselves

Having less control over some household tasks they had got used to doing, such as managing money. The ex-prisoner may want to take those tasks on again leading to anxiety about his/her spending or whether bills are being paid on time

Children being resentful of being told what to do by a person who has been absent for some time, or jealous of the attention that person is getting from the parent who they had had to themselves while the other was away. The parent who has been away may not fully realise how much the children have grown up and treat them as if they are much younger than they actually are, being excessively strict or protective.

### **If I'm experiencing relationship problems when a prisoner comes home, who can I talk to?**

PFFS is happy to provide a listening ear on its freephone helpline (0808 808 3444). If you live in London, you could come to the office, either for a one to one chat with a member of staff, or to our family centre – a chance to meet other people in the same situation, talk things over with the staff or just get away from it all for a few hours. For further details about the programme, please call the helpline. Alternatively, for more specialist relationship advice, contact Relateline on 0845 130 4010 (web site [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk))

Further reading: *Preparing for Release*, A booklet by Action for Prisoners' Families. If you would like a copy, please contact our helpline.

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