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Fathers Inside course overview

Part 1 Introduce skills and information: Induction and Lessons 1 - 10

Induction

The Induction lesson starts with students being told that *Fathers Inside* has been developed by prisoners for prisoners. This information helps to reassure them that the course activities are credible and appropriate to meet their needs as learners in prison.

Students introduce themselves and articulate their reasons for wanting to do the course. They discuss how taking part in *Fathers Inside* might help them prevent their children from experiencing prison. The origins of *Fathers Inside* are summarised before students are introduced to the course content, materials and teaching methods. Students then watch an induction video made by course graduates from HMP Ashwell, who describe what to expect and the benefits of taking part.

Students consider the time commitment required of them by identifying their availability on a course planner. This encourages them to consider the learning needs of other group members, avoid disruptions to course delivery, and understand what is required to achieve their awards. They are also made aware that they will be working towards a Presentation to an invited audience, and will be introduced to representatives from support agencies that can assist them with sentence planning and resettlement. All of this information is designed to help students to make an informed choice about whether to participate in *Fathers Inside*.

Finally the lesson concludes with students taking part in a game that requires them to memorise each other's names, and they have an opportunity to discuss any outstanding questions.

Learning outcome 1

Have an awareness of the responsibilities of being a parent

Working with students of mixed abilities and nationalities it is essential that they have a common understanding of the key words used in the Parentcraft criteria. After matching key words with their definitions, students dramatise this information, which includes the word 'responsibility'. This activity establishes effective communication an essential parental responsibility.

Why and how children are educated are major themes in *Fathers Inside*. Using role play students discuss the benefits and purpose of teaching children ground rules to live and learn safely and constructively in both family and educational environments. Students then read and analyse an extract from Plato's 'The Republic' which provokes discussion on who is responsible for the education of children and how, as fathers inside, they can contribute to their child's education.

Fathers Inside incorporates Plato's idea that fiction is an effective method to educate "mind" and "character". This is illustrated by the use of the course film 'Blinda'. This story, about a prisoner who learns how to parent, requires students to identify behaviours that can help a father in prison to fulfil his responsibilities.

To ensure the group are confident in their understanding and use of the word 'responsibility', students use 'tableaux', a theatrical technique, to present three-dimensional images illustrating the consequences of a father's behaviour on close family members.

Students then consider the different responsibilities required of a full-time carer and identify how they can provide support from prison. This involves drawing a cartoon representing a 'perfect dad'. This activity enables students to analyse their perceptions of what it means to behave responsibly, and their expectations of what can be achieved by a father in prison.

Finally students are provided with opportunities to apply skills to demonstrate responsible behaviour. This is achieved by practising how to converse appropriately on the telephone and writing about the course. This encourages students to communicate responsibly with their children, their children's carers and resettlement agencies.

Learning outcome 2

Understand the rights and needs of different family members

Students consider the subject of needs first to understand the link between the two elements of the criterion, ie that rights are created to protect needs. They listen to a reading of the fairy story 'Sleeping Beauty, and identify the essential survival and development needs of a growing child. The course film 'Blinda' is then used to help students identify the specific needs of family members when a father is imprisoned. Working in small groups students discuss how to cope with meeting the needs of family members from prison by devising and presenting scenarios showing a variety of ways of responding to a child's needs during a prison visit. This approach focuses on the specific needs of a child to prepare the ground for understanding the difference between the rights of children and adults.

Students then review the definition of the word 'right', and recognise that having rights includes having responsibilities. A diagram is used to simplify a complex subject and put rights into a social context which includes an introduction to the UN convention on rights. Students then participate in a selection of games designed to develop a more sophisticated understanding of rights, and introduce information associated with parental responsibility.

Returning to Plato's ideas about how to educate children students consider the child's right to an education by playing a game to highlight the relationship required between parents and teachers to support a child's education. Debate is used to encourage students to evaluate the consequences to parents if a child truants from school. This approach helps them to formulate new ideas about how to support their child's education and articulate what they have learnt to date about rights and needs. Finally students work in pairs to rehearse how to communicate effectively and appropriately on the telephone to support their child's right to an education.

Learning outcome 3

Recognise the importance of being honest with children and others in the family

Three Aesop's fables and a trust game are used to introduce different aspects of honesty and enable students to experience the benefits of trust within the group. They consider the difference between lying and cheating, and the long-term effects these behaviours can have on the relationship between parent and child. The fables are also used to provide students with ideas about how to teach their children the consequences of being dishonest.

The group identifies common family situations where they have had difficulty communicating honestly with their children. They then improvise telephone calls to fictional family members to enable them to find the appropriate language and tone to deal honestly with subjects specifically related to the causes and effects of imprisonment.

In small groups students devise and perform their own fable to reinforce understanding of situations when it is important to be honest with children. The approach supports Plato's premise that children learn from fiction, and provides students with direct experience of using their imagination to communicate a message about honesty.

Part 2 Build on learning: Lessons 11 - 20

Learning outcome 4

Understand the importance of listening to children and giving them choices

The action of listening has been broken down into separate elements to help students practise different ways of listening. This approach equips with skills to develop relationships with their children and the carer of their children by communicating more effectively from prison.

The first activity is a game where students work in pairs to give and carry out instructions without visual cues. This raises awareness of the difference between speaking and listening on the telephone. The activity encourages students to consider how they use the telephone, and to plan what they want to say to achieve a desired outcome. Students then participate in a face-to-face speaking and listening exercise which highlights the effect of gesture, facial signals and posture on the listener. They discuss the experience for an adult and a child of receiving inappropriate body language, and suggest alternative behaviours.

To help students understand the link between listening to children and giving them choices to resolve conflict, the group participates in improvisations that mirror common domestic scenarios involving parents and children. This enables them to consider the impact on a child when an adult either acknowledges or denies their feelings and opinions. This approach gives students a more sophisticated understanding of the importance of listening to children, and the effect they can have when communicating to their child.

Learning outcome 5

Recognise the major stages of a child's development and be aware of some of the techniques that may be used to cope with children's behaviour

Four lessons are dedicated to understanding the issues associated with this criterion. To introduce the physical differences between children as they are growing up, students work in pairs to identify and mimic different postures of children at different ages, which they present to each other. They then learn the major stages of a child's physical and behavioural development by categorising events and experiences into four stages.

The subject of health has been chosen to reinforce students' understanding of child development. They draw upon their own experience of childhood health through different stages to produce evidence for a survey. This activity helps students to consider the relationship between health and the changing lifestyle of a child, and how with this knowledge, fathers can anticipate the appropriate care for their child.

Continuing the theme of using fiction to educate both children and fathers inside, students look at a wide range of children's books and identify which ones are suitable for different ages. Books are provided by the prison librarian who gives a talk on the benefits of reading and using available literature to support a child's educational development. Working in pairs students review a book and explain to the rest of the group why it is appropriate for a child of a particular age.

The relationship between a child's behaviour and how a parent responds to this is introduced with a game that reminds students of their own teenage behaviour. In small groups they then discuss a selection of typical behaviours associated with early childhood, suggesting ways in which parents could cope with each one. They consider how to support a child's social development and prevent inappropriate behaviour in later life. This is reinforced by students reading and dramatising Aesop's fable 'The Child Thief'. They identify and recognise how storytelling and other techniques can help parents prevent or deal with a child who steals.

A debate on the use of smacking, as form of punishment, has been included on the course because smacking is an experience common to many students. The debate helps the group to consider alternative methods of disciplining a child. In groups, students are given fictional domestic scenarios designed to help them practice different parenting styles and demonstrate techniques to cope with a child's inappropriate behaviour. This enables them to identify and discuss their own 'parenting style' and witness different ways of being in authority.

Learning outcome 6

Understand how children learn through daily activities

Developing the theme of childhood health, students consider how children can learn about personal hygiene by participating in a game that involves memorizing items associated with the bathroom. They then take part in a timed exercise that emphasizes the benefits of eating at a table and consider the advantages to the child of social interaction at mealtimes.

Working in small groups, students create three characters: a mother, a father in prison and a child. They identify the child's daily routine and rehearse and present short scenes illustrating how the parents can motivate and support their child to fulfill a selection of daily activities. Students discuss how they can contribute to their child's daily routine, including schooling, from prison. They also consider how a child's routine will vary according to its stage of development. Students are encouraged to communicate with the child's primary carer about ideas gained throughout the course associated with learning through daily activities.

Learning outcome 7

Be aware of their own needs as a parent and consider ways of meeting them

All the activities covered by this criterion are designed to accommodate the limitations of being a father in prison, and provide students with appropriate skills to help them access initiatives and resources available in their current environment. To introduce the subject of parental needs play a game that focuses on how to find suitable childcare.

Students list the needs of a father who is in prison, and then working in groups, they are given scenarios which require them to anticipate the needs of parents in different circumstances. In preparation for creating a plan of action a game is used to help students experience how to problem-solve. They then produce an action plan for Frank, the protagonist in 'Blinda'. This enables them to practice how to formulate a plan realistic to their current situation.

Before creating their own action plan they review their personal time-management, identify an appropriate support organisation to contact, and send a post card to a member of staff communicating what they have achieved on the course. Finally students write their own action plan which requires them to consider what they intend to do to meet their needs as a parent after course completion.

Part 3 Apply and consolidate learning: Lessons 21 - 30

The climax of *Fathers Inside* involves facilitating a Presentation to an audience at which point students experience the outcome of realising a goal.

Students create, rehearse, direct and deliver the *Fathers Inside* Presentation to an audience of staff and prisoners. This collective experience is a platform for the group to demonstrate their learning about parenting outside the learner group.

Students are required to summarise how each criterion was covered on the course and present examples in the form of scenes and participatory activities. This reinforces their knowledge and reveals to assessors their understanding of their subject. Students communicate the benefits and the difficulties of maintaining paternal relationships from prison to their peer group.

EXTRACT FROM FATHERS INSIDE TEACHERS' MANUAL - LESSON 5

ACTIVITY 4 'Good enough' dads 60 min

Students identify how two different fathers fulfil their responsibilities.

PC AC 1

KSC C1.1a / 2

AL Rt / Rs at E2, E3
AL Wt / Ws /Ww at E1, E2, E3

Objectives

Students will:

- discuss what the description 'good enough' means in relation to a parent (PC LO 1)
- compare and contrast how two fathers fulfil their parental responsibilities from prison (**PC AC 1**) (**KSC C1.1a / 2**)
- develop reading skills by extracting information from a short biography about two different fathers (**KSC C1.2**) (**AL Reading and Writing**).

Instructions

Introduction

- 1 Explain that after agreeing what they think is a perfect dad in activity 3, they are going to consider what it means to be 'good enough' as a parent.
- 2 Explain that the expression 'good enough parent' was first used by the **paediatrician** Donald Winnicot in the mid-1960's. He discovered many parents were living with a constant sense of failure as they were setting themselves unrealistic expectations and goals to achieve for their children: they were putting themselves under pressure to be perfect.
- 3 Tell students they are going to read a short **biography** of two fictional fathers, Eric and Frank from the film 'Blinda'. They will consider whether they are 'good enough' dads by discussing:
 - a) how they fulfil their responsibilities to their child
 - b) the effect of their actions on their child
 - c) what they could each do to be a more responsible dad.
- 4 Check students remember the characters.

Read and complete portfolio pages

30 min

- 1 Pair students.
- 2 Explain that they are going to read about two fathers with their partner and discuss how they think their character fulfils or fails to fulfil his parental responsibilities.
- 3 Tell them to refer to Portfolio p.23 - 26: **Good enough dads**. Ask a volunteer to read the instructions.
- 4 Allocate half the pairs to read p.23: **Father 1, Eric**, and the other half to read p.25: **Father 2, Frank**. Tell all students to sit at a table in a work area (refer to Floor plan 1) with their partner, and underline the words or sentences in their Portfolios that describe how their character:
 - a) fulfils his parental responsibilities, using one colour
 - b) fails to fulfil his parental responsibilities, using a different colour.

- 5 Give each pair two coloured pens. Allow 25 minutes. If appropriate assess for KSC C1.2 or AL Reading and Writing. Use OS from Section 2: **Observation sheets** p.88 for KSC.

Note: OS are not supplied in this pack for AL Reading and Writing. Adapt those supplied for Speaking and Listening, or refer to the awarding body or the Adult Literacy Coordinator in the Education department for a standard version.

Discuss Frank and Eric

10 min

- 1 Ask pairs to sit in a circle.
- 2 Display **FC 4:** *How two different fathers fulfil their responsibilities from prison* and ask students who read the biography of Eric (Father 1) to suggest answers to fill in the relevant columns. Refer to **RS 2:** *Portfolio p.23 - 26: Good enough dads.*
- 3 Repeat for Frank (Father 2).

Q **Does the fact that Eric wants to stop drug dealing, or that Frank wants to stay away from pubs make them more responsible fathers ?**

Eg It demonstrates that they understand their behaviour is not beneficial to their children and increases the risk of absence from their family, which is an important step in the process of changing behaviour. However talking without taking action does not help meet their children's needs. Being responsible for a child's needs involves taking action to meet those needs.

Q **Who is the 'better' father of the two ? Give reasons for your answer.**

Eg This will prompt discussion on whether a person can be in prison and be a good father: is it responsible behaviour ?

Discuss the expression 'good enough' parent

10 min

Q **What do we expect from a 'good enough' parent ?**

Eg They do their best to fulfil their responsibilities towards their child/ren whatever their circumstances. If they are having difficulties meeting their child's needs they seek appropriate support and make sure their child understands any changes that occur within the family.

Q **What can prevent people from being 'perfect' or 'good enough' parents ?**

Eg Pressures of day-to-day life: tiredness, stress, arguments, lack of emotional support, lack of confidence, selfishness, long-term unemployment, minor illness. Difficult life events: prison, sudden unemployment, major illness or injury, separation from a partner, disability, death, drug or alcohol abuse.

Q **How do we judge that a parent is good enough ?**

Eg It depends on the values of the person judging, and may change according to the age of the child: by the health and happiness of a child, success at school, whether the child has friends, whether all a child's material needs are met, whether they stay out of trouble, if they manage to live and independent and legal life on leaving home.

Q **Can you be a good enough parent without having a lot of money ? How ?**

Q **Can you be a good enough parent from prison ? How ?**

- Q **Is Frank a good enough parent ? What does he do to demonstrate this ?**
Eg Perhaps not at the beginning of 'Blinda' because he does not consider the consequences of his actions on Wayne, or change his behaviour when he first realises he is able to meet some of Wayne's needs even from prison.
By the end of the film he starts to do the best he can to meet Wayne's needs from the limited circumstances of prison: he makes contact by making the story tape, explains why he was absent, tries to communicate difficult adult emotions in a way that is appropriate for Wayne's age, puts aside his own feelings of guilt and denial to make contact.

Activity review

10 min

- Q **What is the difference between 'good enough' and 'perfect' parents ?**
- Q **Why might it be necessary to discuss what makes a parent good enough ?**
Eg To help parents identify what their responsibilities are towards their children, and make sure they understand how they can help their child develop into a healthy adult. To protect children from possible abuse or neglect due to parents ignoring their responsibilities.
- Q **How can you fulfil your parental responsibilities from prison ?**
Eg Refer to Frank's actions in 'Blinda'.
Communicate by writing letters and stories, and making phone calls.
Support the child's other parent or carer by helping them to plan, listening to their difficulties and giving constructive suggestions.
Show an active interest in your child and what they are doing by asking questions and remembering what you have been told.
Improve your skills to be able to contribute to your child's school work and get work on release.

Record students' suggestions on **FC 4: *How can a father fulfil his responsibilities from prison ?***

- Q **Do you think it is easier to be a father today than it was for:**
a) your father ?
b) your grandfather ?

Give reasons for your answers.