
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Clinks Families Network – Combating Stigma and Supporting Families Affected by the Criminal Justice System

Reducing stigma for those affected by the criminal justice system is essential in addressing social inequity. This MoU sets out our joint commitment to challenge negative perceptions and foster a more just and supportive society for impacted children and families.

The Clinks Families Network aims to actively tackle stigma faced by children & families of individuals involved in the criminal justice system, including those affected by arrest, imprisonment, resettlement, and recall. We will focus on promoting positive outcomes and strengthening family connections, subject to the needs and rights of children and vulnerable adults, to support rehabilitation and well-being. We will use the overarching aims of the Network's Terms of Reference document (TOR) and Memorandum of Understanding (stigma) to achieve this.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this MoU is for members to agree to:

- reduce stigma experienced by children and families connected to the criminal justice system.
- adopt behaviours and strategies that improve the wellbeing of families and contribute towards positive change for them, including the person in prison where appropriate.
- highlight the resilience and potential of children and families, especially when supported appropriately.
- ensure the voices of those with lived experience inform policies and practices.
- champion robust and proportionate safeguarding practice to ensure that the safety, welfare, rights and needs of children, women and vulnerable adults, are protected and upheld.

2. Actions and Commitments

We agree to do this by:

- Promoting dignity and respect for families in all communications, avoiding negative stereotypes.
 - Raising awareness of the negative effect of stigma and advocate policy change to reduce isolation and discrimination.
 - Sharing positive stories and evidence-based research to encourage inclusive, supportive narratives.
 - Scrutinising government policy and statutory provision, to identify where gaps may compromise the safety, protection or wellbeing of children and families.
 - Ensuring sensitivity and empathy in interactions, providing emotional and practical support.
 - Training staff and volunteers to recognise and challenge stigma, including neurodivergence awareness, trauma informed practice, and to listen to and engage those with lived experience.
 - Engaging families, including young people, where possible, in decision-making and policy development
 - Promoting positive media representation and counteract harmful coverage by engaging with media outlets.
 - Working together on public campaigns to challenge stigma and advocate for systemic change
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3. Shared Values

- To support families with dignity, free from discrimination and stigmatisation.
 - To recognise and meet diverse needs, offering tailored support throughout the criminal justice process.
 - To use trauma-informed, strength-based approaches.
 - To promote hope and positive futures for affected families and communities.
 - To challenge negative rhetoric and reframe public discourse, emphasising positive change.
 - To recognise and challenge the persistence of deep racial inequality in the criminal justice system and the harms this causes to children and families from minority communities
 - To address stigma as a driver of social inequity, valuing lived experience
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4. Monitoring and Accountability

Regularly review progress and share best practices within the Clinks Families Network.