

## Piloting the use of Child Impact Assessments: Addressing concerns and risks



Potential concerns and risks can be barriers to the success of a pilot project. Naming and addressing these upfront can help mitigate the impact of problems that may arise. This in turn may increase active support for, and participation in, the project. Possible concerns and risks regarding a project to pilot the use of Child Impact Assessments include (though are not limited to):

### 1. Concerns about funding: “A pilot project costs money that we do not have.”

This toolkit and the resources within in it can be accessed free of charge. One of the main costs of a small-scale pilot project to determine the impact of using Child Impact Assessments would be staff time, and in many cases the nature of this support may be incorporated within existing job descriptions. Evaluating a pilot project may incur additional cost, but this could be undertaken by PhD or Masters students, for example, as part of their required course work. Furthermore, this work might save costs. Research suggests that supporting children as early as possible can reduce costs of interventions at a later stage.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Concerns about staff capacity: “We’re just too busy and over-stretched to be involved in a pilot project.”

Feedback from practitioners during the consultation for this toolkit suggested that a tool such as the Child Impact Assessment could encourage more effective partnership working which in turn might reduce workload. The use of a Child Impact Assessment need not require additional workload, rather a more creative and innovative way of working with children.

### 3. Concerns about public perception: “Why should children with a parent in the criminal justice system get support? What about the victims of crime?”

The imprisonment of a household member is a recognised Adverse Childhood Experience that is known to cause harm to children if they are not supported.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of what their parent has been accused or convicted of, children affected have not committed a crime and need support in and of their own right. Many are victims themselves of stigma, marginalisation, and discrimination.

### 4. The risk that a Child Impact Assessment causes more harm to children: “What if it further stigmatises them?”

By its very nature, the Child Impact Assessment is child-centred and is used to listen without judgement to children’s feelings, views, and concerns and to what support they feel they might need. If it is used in this way, children will be appropriately supported and meaningfully included in decision-making about them.

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<sup>1</sup> Action for Children. (2022). *Early help is the best option for children and families. We need to protect it.* <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/blog/early-help-is-the-best-option-for-children-and-families-we-need-to-protect-it/>

<sup>2</sup> Felitti, V.J. et al. (1998). “Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14(4), 245-258