



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

National Offender  
Management Service








**Families do matter**

Project Report 2009




West Midlands Children and Families of Offenders Pathfinder

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## FOREWORD

This Project has broken significant ground in raising the profile of children and families of offenders.

In essence the Project has started to mainstream the challenges of keeping families together or more specifically ensuring that children have the right to contact with their parent, irrespective of their punishment either by period of imprisonment or by a community penalty.

As the Senior Responsibility Officer for the Project and Regional Offender Manager my assessment before the Project commenced in 2005/6 was that this was a “hidden issue” dealt with by Prisons and Probation Areas in the region with the support of the voluntary and independent sector. As the Project reached its formal conclusion as an “Invest to Save” Project, the position is very different.

Within the draft National Benchmarking Specifications for this area of work, there is an acceptance that this important work with children and their families is a shared valuable investment for their future between Correctional Services and Local Authority Children’s Services.

The Project has achieved a great deal in raising the credibility and significance of this area of work at Local Authority and practitioner level as to the needs of offenders/prisoners, their children and families. Local Authority Services now operate from prisons in the region and are increasingly prepared to see their responsibilities for prisoners as being predicated on the siting of a prison and not on the original home address of the prisoners.

As with the purpose of NOMS, there are now important building blocks and components of an integrated approach to supporting families of offenders in place in the West Midlands. The Project needs consolidating both in terms of policy and practice and to that end I am pleased that elements of the Project’s work will continue in 2009/10 with the support of both NOMS and DCSF.

The Project Review completed by the University of Wrexham highlighted the importance of practitioner training, referral partnerships between Local Authority Children and Families Coordinators, Prisons and Probation Officers working together and school based work where Families Do Matter promoted a school “Parent in Prison” policy.

Finally the Project has highlighted the importance of outreach work from key statutory providers such as Family Information Services and Children Centres into Correctional Services. The Project has already developed a knowledge base, analysed needs and gaps in service provision, improved knowledge and awareness and impacted on the configuring of core services for children.

It is not possible to highlight the long or short term impact on levels of reduced reoffending by parents or the impact of these related initiatives on the levels of criminality of children whose family contacts have been maintained or enhanced. Such questions would require a further complex study involving control groups. However initial “results” are encouraging in terms of improved practice and policy by a variety of agencies.

I would like to particularly thank the Project Team who have been very well led by John Withington, whose energy and vision has been a great asset, the Project Board for its oversight of the Project during some difficult periods and their constant offering of practical and challenging advice, and to HMPS and Local Authorities, and the four Probation Areas in the region, for their support to the project during the last three years.



*Dr Steve Goode  
Regional Offender Manager  
West Midlands*



## Testimonials



The Government Office Children & Learners Directorate has been extremely pleased to be involved in an initiative that supports some of the most vulnerable children and families in our region.

The work of the Families Do Matter Project has been instrumental in utilising developments such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to bring partners together to ensure families of offenders receive the most appropriate package of support. We are keen to promote the joint working across all agencies that this project has enabled and we encourage all local authorities to build upon the best practice developed in the three pilot sites of Wolverhampton, Coventry, and Telford & Wrekin.

Locally the Families Do Matter Project has provided opportunities for key partners such as schools and children's centres to shape a response to working with these vulnerable families. The project has been a vehicle for enabling regional networks and the voluntary sector to play a part and we hope that the project will have a lasting impact in bringing services together to provide a full package of support for children and families of offenders.

### **Clive Wilkinson**

*Director for Children and Learners,  
Govt Office West Midlands*



I've had the privilege to be – as Director of Children's Services in Birmingham – the 'critical friend' to the Families Do Matter programme. From the start I was

interested to see how attention to the engagement between prisoners and their families might help reduce reoffending and strengthen families ties at a most difficult time and I've been very interested in the developments around initial analyses of prison visiting.

Most of all I've welcomed the development of the linkage between core services available to prisoners and their families and the wider world of Children's Services. I am very supportive of the developments which put children's services staff and access to the common assessment framework within the context of prison and probation services. This is something which Directors of Children's Services can build on – ensuring that every child really does matter, particularly those facing real challenges of having a parent in prison.

I look forward to supporting the mainstreaming of the learning from the project. Through working together we can really make a difference!

### **Tony Howell**

*Strategic Director – Children, Young People & Families  
Birmingham City Council*

# INTRODUCTION

The Families Do Matter Project team has been working for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) over a three and a half year period to identify opportunities to improve the delivery of services to offenders and their families, aimed at improving those family ties and by so doing seeking to contribute to reducing reoffending. Much of the project's work has focused on offenders being held in prisons, looking at visiting and educational programmes as well as encouraging other organisations to contribute their resources to assist with this audience. However, the project has also been aware that there is work to be done with those serving all or part of their sentences in the community and, as a result, under the supervision of the probation service. The project's focus has increasingly turned to creating partnerships and processes which seek to coordinate the delivery of services by community based organisations, to focus on the needs of offenders and their families, both within prisons and within the community.



The prison environment in which many of these services are delivered is an especially challenging one and those challenges are outlined in a number of independent reports and research papers, many of which are referred to in the 'Context – Research and Policy' section later in this report. Prisons have many roles to fulfil and recognise that in doing so they need to achieve the right balance between punishment and rehabilitation. Their priority remains that of a secure location to hold offenders and by doing so to protect the public. At the same time, many prisons are busy with a wide range of activities designed to contribute to the education and ultimately to the rehabilitation of prisoners. It is in this area that much of the work of the Families Do Matter Project has been concentrated.

Whilst NOMS' focus on reducing reoffending includes seven 'pathways' of activity, of which Children and Families is only one, it is increasingly recognised that this is an area in which positive progress can contribute to delivery of the other pathways; such as 'accommodation', 'drugs and alcohol' and 'attitudes and behaviour'. Stable family relationships can potentially provide a base from which an offender can seek to address his offending behaviours and the issues that contribute to them. Whilst that potential is recognised it needs also to be acknowledged that NOMS does not yet have any targets and performance measures to support the delivery of the Children and Family Pathway. That situation exists also for other pathways but in some of those, the activities that prisons undertake are more developed and embedded in the routines of the prison environment.

Whilst NOMS and partner organisations have an increasingly developing awareness of the importance of the family there is not yet a strategic plan for the delivery of consistent levels of children and family specific services and support through prisons and probation. There are a large number of third sector organisations working tirelessly with offenders and their families, to both secure funding and to deliver services that benefit the users and the prisons and probation offices that supervise them. These third sector organisations in some instances have a regional presence and have been able to take a leading role in local and regional coordination in very strong partnerships with NOMS. There are, however, far more organisations with a very local focus, in many instances with varied funding streams with a particularly exclusive remit. As a result, the levels of services available differ greatly depending upon locations and from region to region. Some prison establishments have a number of committed partner organisations and similarly committed and creative prison staff who work together to develop the services they can offer. Others are not so fortunate.



It is in this arena that the FDM project has been working, both attempting to improve the local and regional delivery of children and family relevant services and also to inform the process of the strategic development of this agenda. The work has increasingly involved partnerships with community based service providers and also the realisation that the impacts on, and futures of, the family members is at least as important as the attempts to reduce the offender's own potential to reoffend.

This report is not a new piece of research with new findings on the link between families and offending behaviour. It is one which details some of the work of the project to improve delivery in the West Midlands and its attempts to contribute to the delivery of a wider policy and a strategic approach across offender management agencies and statutory and third sector children and family service providers. Ultimately, the challenge in this arena is not just to better meet the needs of the 82,000 prisoners in our jails, nor the estimated 150,000 offenders under the supervision of probation services. It is to improve the outcomes experienced by the families of those offenders, the 160,000 children affected each year by the imprisonment of a parent, the opportunities which they have access to and the potential which they are able to realise.



# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Bid

The project began life as ISB Project 417 West Midlands Children and Families of Offenders in a bid for funding for three years from April 2005. The bid was submitted by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in consultation with a range of stakeholders including Action for Prisoners’ Families, the Department for Education and Schools, Department of Health, Department for Constitutional Affairs and Her Majesty’s Prison Service and the National Probation Service. The bid was intended to support a key action area in the 2004 *Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan* to work with a region to establish best practice in working with the children and families of offenders.

The bid documentation included a full list of objectives summarised by the following mission and vision statements;

### [mission]

**1** “**To provide evidence** of the longer term impact and benefit of supporting offenders to maintain and strengthen their relationships with their children and families. To demonstrate the cost benefits of investing in family support services as a resource in the process of rehabilitation, crime reduction and creating safer communities.”

### [vision]

**2** “**To provide a partnership** structure and environment to design and deliver collaborative projects, that will develop new capabilities, service or business operations in the West Midlands Region that maintain and strengthen offenders’ relationships with their children and families.”

The decision was made to base the project within the West Midlands region, one which at that point had no history of coordinated delivery within the Children and Family Pathway and, unlike some other locations, no pre-existing strong regional third sector partner organisation. This was seen as an opportunity to build a new delivery base in the West Midlands.

 Some examples of strong regional third sector partnerships with NOMS on Children and Family Pathway work exist, most notably; Partners of Prisoners’ Support Group (POPS) in the North West, Ormiston Trust in Eastern region and Thames Valley Partnership in the South East.





## Funding

In accordance with standard ISB principles, funding was approved for three years. This was later extended to an additional year with support from NOMS due to the difficulties in early progress. By the end of its four year life cycle, and with the staffing problems experienced throughout, the project has spent around half of the total available funding.

## Governance

The Families Do Matter Project is sponsored by NOMS with the West Midlands Regional Offender Manager (ROM) as the senior responsible owner (SRO). The project governance structure included a Steering Group, chaired by the SRO and including senior staff representatives from Her Majesty's Prison Service, Probation Service, NOMS Policy, Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) and other stakeholder organisations including third sector and local authority statutory services. The Steering group met quarterly to review ISB stage reports and to review and agree action plans. Full details of the group's membership appears in the acknowledgments section.



## History

The project was due to start in April 2005 but was slow to commence due to recruitment problems. A project manager was not in place until January 2006 and other recruitment took longer. It was not until May of 2006 that other staff began to arrive and by October of that year the staffing level had reached seven, its highest compliment. Project activity was rationalised due to the difficulty in achieving the staffing levels (up to ten staff) envisaged in the original bid and the delays in implementation.

Early work focused on five 'pilot' prisons – HMP Birmingham, HMYOI Brinsford, HMP/YOI Drake Hall, HMP Shrewsbury and HMYOI Stoke Heath. Action plans were agreed with each prison, based around improving facilities for visits and agreeing the delivery and evaluation of relationship and parenting educational programmes. A number of physical and system improvements were achieved at these sites but evaluation of education interventions was hampered by delivery issues within individual establishments.

By late 2007, five of the team had left the project including the Project Manager. Progress on work streams had been slow and the project was faltering. An external review had illustrated why many of the original objectives were overly ambitious and undeliverable, specifically in relation to proving the links and long term benefits of this work on reducing reoffending. The project Board recruited a new Project Manager and agreed a further restructure of activity, focusing on building partnerships and improving operational delivery. At this point the project's work was redefined as having three branches – 'visiting', 'education' and 'community'. Particular focus turned to working with community based organisations and local authorities, specifically in Coventry and Telford & Wrekin.

This approach was encouraged by the release of the joint *Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Department of Schools and Families (DCSF) Children of Offenders Review*, and similar independent research which had highlighted the poor outcomes for families of offenders and emphasised the need for a joined up approach towards targeting services to this audience.

Work increased on evaluating visitor trends across the region and identifying opportunities for improvements but whilst support continued on individual interventions, work on the education branch was scaled down.





Increasingly, attention turned to the evolving work with community based children and family services, building interest and awareness of the needs of offenders' families and forming structures and partnerships to assist service providers to access this group more effectively. The project used the developing Think Family agenda, and specifically the Families at Risk Review and the Every Child Matters objectives of statutory children's services, to illustrate how the project's emerging strategy was able to deliver processes and partnerships which together could meet these objectives as well as serving the NOMS reducing reoffending agenda.

The Families Do Matter project has now formally concluded. The sections that follow outline its work in the three core areas of 'Visiting', 'Education' and 'Community', and include the details of legacy work either in the form of physical and system improvements or strategic proposals for future adoption. At the time of completing this report the project has achieved partial mainstream funding to continue its work. This will focus on the area of community partnership work detailed in the later parts of this report, most specifically expanding the awareness raising training and the partnerships between children's services, prisons and probation offices that flow from it.



## Research – The offender

Evidence from the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders<sup>1</sup> suggests that nearly half of all prisoners will lose contact with their family during their prison sentence. A large amount of failure to re-establish contact with outside family ties upon leaving prison has been attributed to the attitudes and behaviour of the fathers, in terms of those who commit crimes having an increased likelihood of exhibiting antisocial and egocentric conduct likely to impair or disrupt family bonds<sup>2</sup>. However, imprisonment in itself has a negative impact upon family relationships<sup>3</sup>.

The parent-child relationship can be invaluable in terms of acting as a rehabilitation factor<sup>4</sup>, and as a 'turning point' in the inmate's life<sup>5</sup> and the quality of the relationship has been indicated to be a major predictor of a return to custody<sup>6</sup>. It has been suggested that prisoners have a decreased likelihood of reoffending, by up to six times<sup>7</sup>, should they be able to retain family contact and that having a supportive family and friends can help prisoners to cope and successfully complete their sentence and rejoin the community upon discharge from prison<sup>8</sup>. It has also been found that this increased contact may not only benefit the family and the prisoner but could indeed benefit the prison, it being shown that prisoners who engaged in stable relationships outside of prison were more likely to be stable prisoners inside prison<sup>9</sup>.

*Resettlement Surveys Reoffending Analysis*<sup>10</sup> found that receiving family visits was associated with reduced chances of the prisoners reoffending after release. Those prisoners who were visited by a partner or family member had a significantly lower reoffending rate than those who were not visited. The odds for reoffending were 39% higher for prisoners who had not received visits compared to those who had. This evidence would suggest there is some association between family contact while in prison and subsequent reduced offending rates upon release from prison.

Imprisonment of women can have particularly grave implications, especially when they have been the sole carers of their children prior to imprisonment. Concern over their children is cited by women in custody as one of the most important factors in causing them depression and anxiety, and in leading to self-harm. The preservation of family ties for women prisoners can be especially challenging with children often being in the care of extended families or in social services, and with fewer women's prisons meaning longer distances to travel and greater costs for visitors. The recent Corston report highlighted the plight of women prisons and the impacts on family relationships.

1 NACRO, 2000

2 Western, Lopoo & McLanahan, 2004

3 Nurse, 2004; Western, Lopoo & McLanahan, 2004

4 Dyer, 2005

5 Hughes, 1998; Pattillo, Weiman & Western, 2004

6 Bahr et al, 2005

7 Ditchfield, 1994

8 Loucks, 2005

9 McLellan, 2005

10 May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008



Each year it is estimated that more than 17,700 children are separated from their mother by imprisonment.

Just 5% of women prisoners' children remain in their own home once their mother has been sentenced<sup>11</sup>.

At least a third of mothers are lone parents before imprisonment<sup>12</sup>.

Only 9% of children whose mothers are in prison are cared for by their fathers in their mothers' absence<sup>13</sup>.

Only half of the women who had lived, or were in contact with, their children prior to imprisonment had received a visit since going to prison<sup>14</sup>.

One Home Office study showed that for 85% of mothers, prison was the first time they had been separated from their children for any significant length of time. It also showed that 65% of mothers in prison were receiving their first custodial sentence.<sup>15</sup>

Separation is harmful for mothers and their children who can become innocent victims who get caught up in what has been described as a 'cycle of pain'<sup>16</sup>. The study conducted on behalf of the European Parliament<sup>17</sup> confirms that 'Losses and ruptures due to separation... from children were very much emphasised by all country reports as a major source of pain in prison for women'. Prisoners who have 'failed' as citizens can 'succeed' as parents and furthermore, success as a parent can help them to become better citizens.

*"The effects on the 18,000 children every year whose mothers are sent to prison are so often nothing short of catastrophic"*

Baroness Jean Corston, 2007 – *A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice system.*

11 Prison Reform Trust (2000) *Justice for Women: The Need for Reform*, London: Prison Reform Trust

12 Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners*, London: Social Exclusion Unit

13 The government's response to the report by Baroness Corston of *A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, December 2007

14 Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners*, London: Social Exclusion Unit

15 Home Office Research Study 162 (1997), *Imprisoned Women and Mothers*, Home Office: London

16 Greene, Haney & Hurtado, 2000

17 European Parliament, 2008

Studies have proved that good family links are important at the time of the release notably because having a stable family environment to return to is a major disincentive to recidivism<sup>1</sup>. Visits are a vital way of maintaining family relationships to prisoners. However, a certain number of factors such as inflexible visiting conditions and unfriendly visiting environments can cause a disruption in family relationships and contact with children. The *European Parliament Report (2008)* on the situation of women in prison and the impact of the imprisonment of parents on social and family life states that the challenge is ‘to create an environment that balances both the needs of security and of good family contact (flexible visiting conditions, visit room allowing more freedom of movement and family privacy, friendly environment for children, etc.)’.

*“A stable, supportive family throughout the sentence is a key factor in preventing reoffending on release... I firmly believe that we should do as much as possible to sustain family relationships at what for many will be an especially traumatic time in their lives”*

Martin Narey, Director General Prison Service – House of Commons, 2005 S.29.

Supportive family ties clearly play a role in the return to a supportive environment and help to encourage desistance from crime<sup>2</sup>. However, providing assistance to families with respect to their impact on reoffending by a prisoner can be problematic for a number of reasons<sup>3</sup>. Preparation may be an essential ingredient in bridging the gap between the reality and anticipation of family life following imprisonment, as men’s ideas regarding their relationships with spouses and children may be unrealistic, ambiguous or unreflective<sup>4</sup>. In terms of the adequacy of fathering abilities, imprisoned fathers refer to feelings of ‘helplessness’ and difficulties experienced in terms of being a ‘good father’<sup>5</sup>, with many men being entirely dependent upon non-imprisoned mothers or carers of their children to arrange and deliver contact with their children.

The impact of incarceration upon partner relationships can be marred by confusion and conflict due to decreasing commitment, contact and the stress of low-income<sup>6</sup>. Incarceration can result not only in the temporary, but also the permanent separation of partners. Levels of distress and suffering experienced by separating parents may result in them being unable to provide support and reassurance required by their children<sup>7</sup>. It has been argued that parents experiencing a corrosive dispute may well be unable to represent their children’s requirements objectively<sup>8</sup>.

1 Robertson, 2007

2 Maruna, 2000; Farrall & Calverley, 2005

3 Codd, 2007

4 Day et al, 2005

5 Arditti et al, 2005

6 Roy & Dyson, 2005

7 Rodgers and Pryor, 1998

8 Mantle, 2001a; 2001b



## The Social and Personal Background of Prisoners

### Disadvantaged Background and Family Context

Compared with the general population, prisoners are:

- **thirteen** times as likely to have been in care as a child
- **thirteen** times as likely to be unemployed
- **ten** times as likely to have been a regular truant
- **two and a half** times as likely to have had a family member convicted of a criminal offence
- **six** times as likely to have been a young father
- **fifteen** times as likely to be HIV positive
- **twenty** times more likely than the general population to have been excluded from school

### Lacking in Basic Skills

Compared to an 11 year old child:

- **80%** have at best the same level of writing skills
- **65%** have at best the same level of numeracy skills
- **50%** have at best the same level of reading skills

### Personal Problems

- **60% to 70%** of prisoners were using drugs before imprisonment
- **70%+** suffer from at least two mental disorders
- **20%** of males have attempted suicide in the past
- **37%** of females have attempted suicide in the past
- **70%** of those entering the prison had a drug misuse problem

### Social Problems

- **50%** had no GP before they came into custody
- **33%** lose their house while in prison
- **66%** lose their job
- **25%** face financial problems
- **40%** lose contact with their family

\* Adapted from Britain, S.E.U. (2002) *Reducing Reoffending by Ex-Prisoners: Report*, Social Exclusion Unit, Government Office.

## Research – The family

Whilst there is increasing awareness of the role of family ties in reducing reoffending it is clear that the impacts of offending behaviour, and imprisonment of a parent, are felt across the whole family. Young fathers being detained are noted to have an increased likelihood of reporting adverse early relationships with their families<sup>1</sup>. Whilst there is no formal system yet in place for recording the details it is estimated that 162,000 children experience the imprisonment of a parent each year, equating to 7% of all children during their school lives. This number is expected to rise to around 200,000 within five years.

Those children growing up in families wherein poverty and disadvantage are the ‘norm’ are likely to experience similar outcomes to their parents in adulthood, which may ensure that families remain in ‘generational cycles’<sup>2</sup>.

There are potentially severe social pressures for children who are separated from their imprisoned parents. Care arrangements often change, especially for those whose mothers are imprisoned, as do arrangements for schooling as a result. Children are likely to not talk about their situation and sometimes are discouraged from doing so by the remaining parent or new carer. The needs of children of prisoners are often overlooked and children can suffer from isolation, lack of service and social support due in many cases to a fear of disclosing their circumstances to others.

Apart from the pain of separation, loss of income and home, families with a member in prison have a higher likelihood of anti-social behaviour from their distressed children<sup>3</sup>. Young children are less likely to be able to comprehend the system of a prison or reasons as to why a parent is not able to leave and return home with them. Loucks<sup>4</sup> quotes a young mother who stated that at each prison visit her son asked his incarcerated father ‘*Will you come home if I’m a good boy? I’m being good, so why aren’t you coming home?*’ Loucks further points out that young children may fail to remember, or not feel comfortable around parents with whom they may have had little or no contact for periods of time, this can even hold between visits. This can create considerable strain upon the father-child relationship during visits when hopes and expectations are often high.

Parental separation initiates multiple changes in the lives of children and there are a number of factors which will influence the way that children are affected in the long and short term, including manner and cause of parental separation, parental adjustment and financial and emotional issues. Multiple stress factors upon children increase the likelihood of psychological risk. The impact of parental imprisonment on children is noted not to fit into neat categories, differing in gender, age, family, school, life experience and phase of development<sup>5</sup>. This calls for an individual child-specific approach as opposed to a universal approach to dealing with father-child contact at periods of incarceration.

Children are likely to feel better if they are made aware that they still have an important place within the lives of both of their separated parents<sup>6</sup>. Even during periods of deterioration in such relationships for various reasons, relationships are likely to recover if children are made to feel that they are still a part of their parents’ lives.

1 Tan & Quinlivan, 2006

2 SEU, 2002

3 Loucks, 2004a & b

4 Loucks, 2005, p.12

5 Boswell, 2002

6 Hight & Jamieson, 2007





Home Office research has found that 66% of women and 59% of men in prison have dependent children under 18.

25% of boys and young men in young offender institutions are, or are shortly to become, fathers<sup>7</sup>.

Just over half (55%) of male prisoners described themselves as living with a partner before imprisonment<sup>8</sup>, and a third of female prisoners described themselves as living with a husband or partner before imprisonment<sup>9</sup>.

During their sentence 45% of people lose contact with their families and many separate from their partners<sup>10</sup>.

It is estimated that there are around 160,000 children with a parent in prison each year<sup>11</sup>.

In 2006, more children were affected by the imprisonment of a parent than by divorce in the family<sup>12</sup>.

During their time at school 7% of children experience the imprisonment of a parent<sup>13</sup>.

65% of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend<sup>14</sup>.

The work of Murray and Farrington<sup>15</sup> has investigated the longitudinal association between parental imprisonment and adverse outcomes. Parental imprisonment was found to be a strong predictor for antisocial delinquent behaviour - 65% of participants with an incarcerated parent were convicted of crimes between the ages of 19 and 32 years, compared with 21% of those who had not been exposed to parental imprisonment or separation. From their own and other studies Murray and Farrington calculated an odds ratio for the expression of delinquency or antisocial outcomes for the children of incarcerated parents which was found to be 3.4 times the normal risk. Increased risks for mental health problems and poor life success were also noted. This adverse relationship still holds after controlling for other potentially confounding risk factors such as poverty, low IQ and maternal delinquency<sup>16</sup>.

7 Ministry of Justice and Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Children of Offenders Review*, June 2007

8 Home Office (2001) *Criminality Survey: Drugs Follow-Up*, London: Home Office

9 Hamlyn, B. and Lewis, D. (2000) *Women prisoners: a survey of their work and training experiences in custody and on release*, Home Office Research Study 2000, London: Home Office

10 Nacro (2000) *The forgotten majority*, London: Nacro

11 Ministry of Justice and Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Children of Offenders Review*, June 2007

12 Action for Prisoners' Families, CLINKS, Pact, PRT, *The children and families of prisoners: recommendations for government*, 5 December 2007

13 Department for Education and Skills, (2003) *Every Child Matters*

14 Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners*, London: Social Exclusion Unit

15 Murray & Farrington, 2005

16 Murray & Farrington, 2005; Huebner & Gustafson, 2007

It has been found that boys exposed to separation via parental imprisonment were more likely than separated and non-separated peers to be not only poorly supervised, but have fathers who displayed temperaments such as cruelty, passivity or neglect and used harsh/erratic discipline<sup>1</sup>. Those children with parents who have been imprisoned are more likely to have experienced further effects of inappropriate parenting, for example, abuse and placement in care<sup>2</sup>. The conflict likely to cause the most significant harm to a child is that to which a child is directly exposed, particularly physical violence or conflict that a child feels directly involved or caught up in<sup>3</sup>, and while a parent is in prison, this could for some children form a period of respite from parental conflict. Therefore it is important to note that maintaining contact with a parent may not always be in the best interests of the child.

When one parent is imprisoned it is likely to have an adverse impact upon the family, and research indicates that the children of prisoners are at an increased risk of becoming offenders themselves<sup>4</sup>. Parental imprisonment in childhood has been found to be a significant predictor of criminal behaviour as an adult in males and females, with slightly higher likelihood for females<sup>5</sup>.

## Policy – Reducing Reoffending

The Social Exclusion Unit's 2002 report *Reducing Reoffending by ex-prisoners* set out the seven 'pathways' to reducing reoffending. This in turn provided the framework for the Government's *Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plans* in 2004 and 2005, both at national and regional levels. The UK Government set up the cross-Whitehall Reducing Reoffending Programme Board in 2004 and an Inter-Ministerial Group followed in 2006 to oversee national, regional and local development of work to reduce reoffending. Reducing reoffending is a key element of the Home Office Crime Strategy, *Cutting Crime: A New Partnership 2008-11*, and the *Make Communities Safer PSA* under which NOMS is committed to reduce both the volume of adult and youth reoffending, and the severity of reoffending.

*“The costs of reoffending by ex-prisoners alone is at least £11 billion per year and reoffending by those serving sentences in the community adds to the burden which victims and communities face”*

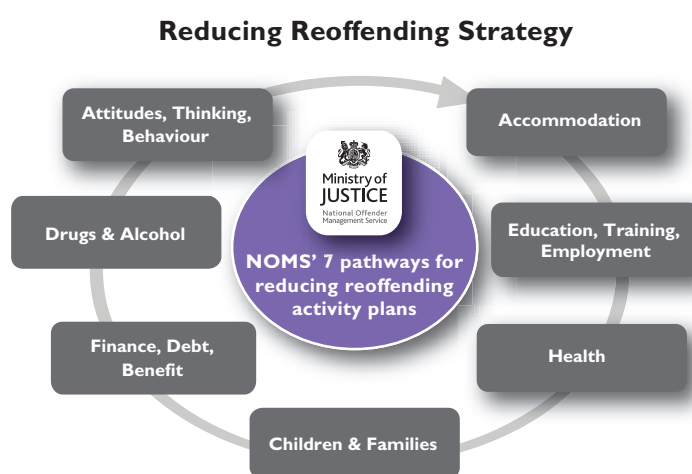
Paul Goggins, Minister for Correctional Services and Reducing Reoffending  
*Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan 2004.*

1 Murray & Farrington, 2005  
2 Dannerbeck, 2005  
3 Davies & Cummings, 1994  
4 Gabel, 1992  
5 Murray et al, 2007



From April 2009, new Directors of Offender Management (DOMs) in England and Wales take over responsibility for leading the existing work to reduce reoffending in their regions. In practice this entails working closely with the Government Office in the region and the Welsh Assembly Government in Wales, their lead providers for prison and probation in their areas, as well as increasingly establishing service level agreements and contracts for offender management services from the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors. Regional Reducing Reoffending Partnership Boards (RRRPBs) act as forums to bring together key partners and contribute to the development and implementation of the Reducing Reoffending Strategy. This involves the development and delivery of regional reducing reoffending strategies and action plans to address the ‘seven’ pathways.

Prisons are also directly involved in local delivery, through their work on resettlement and have a critical role in respect of offender management. Reducing reoffending is a core function of custodial establishments, with all prisons required to have a resettlement business plan that reflects and links into both regional and national reducing reoffending strategies. This requirement is given effect through the Resettlement Prison Service Order. In practice, much of the resettlement work is carried out under the direction of offender managers/supervisors who are also instrumental in the drafting of the resettlement plans. This work rolls over into probation services who supervise offenders on their return to their communities under licence.



The most recent figures available, from 2004, show a 5.8% reduction in adult reoffending against the predicted rate since 2000 and a 6.9% reduction in adult reoffending since 1997.

The Children and Families Pathway is one which is increasingly recognised as having a potentially wide influence on the other pathways. A stable and fulfilling family life is a natural support mechanism in itself to achieving many of the objectives of rehabilitation but, of course, such family lives are not easily achieved by offenders with pre-existing personal and family challenges. Whilst many of the other pathways' activities are firmly embedded in prison regimes, the activities which might support improved family based outcomes are not, with wide variations in approaches and delivery in different locations. Similarly, the role of families, and the offender's own contribution to family, are not issues routinely targeted by probation services.

This lack of defined process has allowed much innovation with a wide range of typically third sector organisations striving to target this audience, both delivering services at local and regional level and seeking to promote a more focused policy approach.

## Policy – Family

In September 2003 the Government published its vision for children’s services in its first Every Child Matters paper. It proposed the reshaping of services to deliver five key outcomes for children:

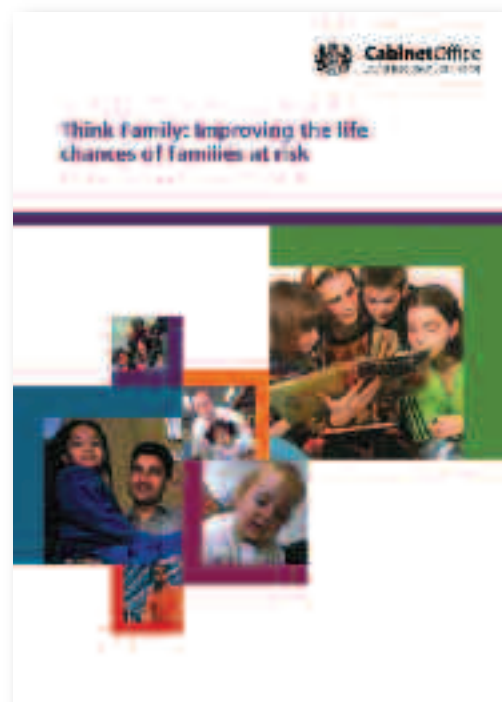
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

The Children Act 2004 established the legal framework for the delivery of these five outcomes and the twenty five specific aims that were identified as contributing to their achievement. The overarching aim of the Act was to move away from a reactive to a proactive way of engaging with children, particularly through much earlier intervention and prevention. Both Prison Governors and Probation Service have important duties under the Act which are reflected in this framework, this includes partnering of a children’s services authority to safeguard and promote the well-being of children, and participation in Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Joint Area Reviews.

The Every Child Matters agenda is the bedrock of statutory service delivery across all local authorities’ children, young people and families directorates.

The *Reaching Out: Think Family Report*<sup>1</sup> formed the first part of the *Families at Risk* review and highlighted how the problems that individual family members face can act as a brake for the whole family and can have a particularly severe impact on children’s development and well-being. The report recognised offenders’ families as being within its ‘at risk’ target group. The report suggests that patterns of poverty, poor qualifications, unemployment, poor health, housing and parenting can damage families throughout their life and become inter-generational. A key theme of the report is engaging agencies in a ‘joined up’ approach to work together with the whole family:

The final report, *Think Family: Improving the Life Chances of Families at Risk* was published in January 2008. It sets out a vision for a local system that improves the life chances of families at risk and helps to break the cycle of disadvantage. It outlines the key characteristics of a system that thinks family at all levels, from governance to the delivery frontline.



<sup>1</sup> Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Carnwell & Buchanan, 2009



The multi-faceted nature of problems and the increasing diversity in the composition and structure of families make tailored, flexible and holistic services vital to success. Getting things back on track to achieve an individualised ‘tailored’ integrated approach able to respond to complex family needs requires improved links between adults and children/family services, and necessitates improved collaboration between prison, probation and family services<sup>2</sup>. The report calls for greater integration for agencies to serve the whole family.

Many children of prisoners have complex needs and are from socially excluded families. Support for them is fractured across time and the family unit. Partnership working can overcome these barriers by recognising that parental imprisonment is a valuable opportunity to identify children at risk of poor outcomes and to offer them support. Currently, systems and services around families are highly complex and fragmented. Often this results in an uncoordinated and inadequate response to chronic, multi-faceted needs, forcing frontline staff to ‘work around’ the system. Families at risk need a more integrated approach. This may mean the application of key principles such as a common vision, clear accountability; multi-agency working; information sharing; and core processes and assessments across services aimed at adults and at children to target more effectively the problems that families face.

In 2007 the DCSF and MOJ published their joint review *Children of Offenders Review: how to support children of prisoners to achieve better outcomes*. It aimed to:

- Examine evidence of the extent to which children who have a parent in prison have poorer outcomes;
- Generate recommendations to ensure existing systems effectively support this group; and
- Increase awareness of this high risk and vulnerable group, enabling their needs to be met more effectively.

The report concluded that:

- Children of prisoners are at risk of poorer outcomes.
- They represent a large vulnerable group but they are invisible: most services who would be in contact with the child are unaware of the family circumstances unless informed directly by the family.
- Local authorities have no picture of demand in their area, and support nationally is patchy and fragmented.
- Parental imprisonment is a good trigger for reviewing these children’s circumstances: a timely opportunity to identify children at risk of poor outcomes and to offer support to the family and children, to mitigate the effects of both parental imprisonment and family circumstance.

These findings identified the need for a mechanism to enable Local Authorities to systematically assess and meet the child’s needs underpinned by awareness-raising amongst service providers.

*Tackling the complex and entrenched exclusion of this small minority requires an additional and more focused approach. **If we are to reach out to families at risk we need to identify and exploit opportunities to build the capacity of systems and services to ‘think family’.***

*This means a shift in mindset to focus on the strengths and difficulties of the whole family rather than those of the parent or child in isolation.*

Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007, p.4



Policy Drivers Supporting Children with a Parent in Prison		
<p><b>Children Act 2004</b></p> <p>The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements through which key agencies cooperate to improve the well-being of children and young people, and widen services' powers to pool budgets.</p>	<p><b>Every Child Matters</b></p> <p><i>Every Child Matters: Change for Children</i> is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be healthy</li> <li>● Stay safe</li> <li>● Enjoy and achieve</li> <li>● Make a positive contribution</li> <li>● Achieve economic well-being.</li> </ul> <p>This means that the organisations involved with providing services to children - from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups - will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life.</p>	<p><b>Think Family</b></p> <p><i>Think Family Report</i> (June 2007) followed by <i>Improving the Life Chances of Families at Risk</i> review. Sets out a vision for a local system that improves the life chances of families at risk and helps to break the cycle of disadvantage. Services should 'Think Family' at all times, seeking to address whole family need. Family Pathfinders invited with Local Authorities bidding for funding to initiate projects.</p>
<p><b>Human Rights Act 1998</b></p> <p><b>The Human Rights Act 1998 (4)</b> states that:</p> <p><i>'Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.'</i></p> <p><i>'There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedom of others.'</i></p> <p>Being in prison inevitably results in interference in maintaining family ties, but it could be argued that the rights of the child and family are being ignored if they are unable to have appropriate access.</p>	<p><b>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989</b></p> <p><b>Article 3 (5):</b> that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, and that they have the right to be heard and have their views taken into consideration.</p> <p><b>Article 9:</b> states shall ensure that children are not separated from their parents against their will. States shall respect the rights of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.</p>	

Figure 1



# THE VISITING EXPERIENCE

## Overview

If we recognise that maintaining family ties for prisoners can contribute positively to both the offender's behaviour and to the family as a whole, then it follows that the opportunities and experiences of visiting prison are fundamental to any attempts to address this area.

The principle of the entitlement within the prison system to enjoy 'Outside Contacts' is established initially within *Prison Rules 1999* within Section 4 and goes on in Section 35 to establish the right to visits for both convicted and unconvicted prisoners. Prison Service Order (PSO) 4410 specifies the working details of this principle, stating that *'visits are seen as crucial to sustaining relationships with close relatives, partners and friends. They help prisoners to maintain links with the community and are associated with a reduced risk of reoffending.'*

*1. Special attention shall be paid to the maintenance of such relationships between a prisoner and his family as are desirable in the best interests of both.*

*2. A prisoner shall be encouraged and assisted to establish and maintain such relations with persons and agencies outside prison as may, in the opinion of the governor, best promote the interests of his family and his own social rehabilitation.*

*Prison Rules 1999 within Section 4 and Section 35*

Whilst the contribution of visits to reducing reoffending has long been assumed, a NOMS commissioned report put that belief into context with its research published in late 2008. *Factors Linked to Reoffending – a follow up to the Resettlement Surveys of 2001, 2003 and 2004*<sup>1</sup> illustrated that prisoners who received family visits had significantly lower reoffending rates than those that did not, with the latter having 18% higher rates of reoffending.

Despite some acknowledgments in PSO 4410 of the need to consider environment and the needs of children, it is generally the case that visiting prison can be a daunting and austere experience, particularly for children. The security disciplines in many prison establishments mean that a visit is routinely accompanied by searching, often involving drug dogs, uniformed officers, basic facilities, fixed seating and minimal physical contact. Nevertheless, the opportunity to enjoy face to face contact remains vital in maintaining family ties and good practice within prisons can make the experience as rewarding as is possible, in otherwise difficult circumstances.

Prisoners have varying entitlements to receive visits dependent upon their status. Prisoners on remand (those awaiting the conclusions of their trials) have a higher entitlement than those already sentenced and amongst sentenced prisoners allowances vary according to whether the prisoner has earned enhanced status due to progress of sentence and behaviour. In many prisons a system of visiting orders (VOs) exists in which the prisoner sends an approved VO to a family member which entitles them to visit at a specified time. In some establishments systems have changed and the prisoner nominates a number of potential visitors who themselves decide when to come, but visits are still restricted in total to the prisoner's entitlement.

<sup>1</sup> May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008





At prisons there will often be a Visitor Centre (VC), which is a building attached to the establishment to which visitors report and register prior to the visit. It will invariably include lockers for personal items to be left and will fulfil some element of a role of imparting relevant information to the visitor, about the visits themselves and sometimes covering support services available within the community. The VC is invariably managed by a contracted provider.

At the appropriate time, the visitors will pass through the prison security system, including automated and manual searches and the use of drug detection dogs. They will pass into a visits hall, varying in size depending on the establishment, where they will be allocated a seating area where the visit will take place. The prisoner will be delivered by prison guards to the seating area and both visitors and prisoner will be required to remain in the allocated seating unless permission is given otherwise. Visits will vary in length dependent upon the system in place but while remand prisoners are entitled to 30 minute visits, most visits will be at least one hour in length and often up to two hours.

Facilities available to visitors will vary from location to location. Some have no dedicated visitor centre and the provision of child friendly areas and any form of support or family information can vary dramatically.

In its initial project specification the project sought to '*...enable children to maintain their relationships and regular contact with an imprisoned parent*' and also to contribute to the achievement of '*a 7% increase in visits*'.

Working with five 'pilot' prisons the project conducted prisoner and staff surveys of the services available and conducted on-site visits. As a result each establishment agreed an action plan of improvement activity, including around the provision of visits and the services available at visits. Much of the project's early work revolved around designing and achieving improvements to the facilities available and the activity reports later will illustrate some of those achievements, most notably with the provision of children's play areas. Training of officers was also commissioned from 'Kids VIP', a third sector organisation working to improve the experience of children visiting prisons. Later work moved to looking at the processes and systems in place to provide visits and starting to gather and assess data and to use that data to influence change.

**The following sections will outline the activities undertaken and some of the outcomes and proposals generated by the project.**



## Visits – Data

### Data Capture

Most prisons are able to provide data about the volumes of visits and visitors attending prisons. Information is routinely captured for the issuing of visiting orders and for security records. There is, however, no standard format or discipline for this data’s capture or retention. The project found no examples of this information being reviewed and assessed to help with understanding visiting trends or to inform management planning, either locally, regionally or nationally. Variations in data capture systems range from paper copies of daily visiting sheets, through localised spreadsheets to standardised IT security records of individual prisoners. These can be collated and held either within the prison by HMPS staff or at visitor centres run by contractors. Again, whatever method was in use, the project was unable to find any examples of management of the data to inform any local decision making, such as changes to the visits timetable.

At the same time there are no official figures for visits collated or published at a national level. Perceptions are generally that visits are reducing, but evidence to support or quantify this has not been available.

In October 2007 the project initiated a standard data capture protocol at the five pilot prisons. Staff were asked to provide completed report sheets on a monthly basis.

DATE	SESSION 1					SESSION 2				
	TOTAL VISITS BOOKED	TOTAL VISITS ATTENDED	NUMBERS OF PEOPLE			TOTAL VISITS BOOKED	TOTAL VISITS ATTENDED	NUMBERS OF PEOPLE		
			ADULTS	CHILD UNDER 10	CHILD OVER 10			ADULTS	CHILD UNDER 10	CHILD OVER 10
1st										
2nd										
3rd										
4th										
5th										
6th										
7th										
8th										

Figure 2 – example of visits data recording sheet.

After early successes the data capture was expanded to include all West Midlands establishments to allow a wider sample size.



Additionally we asked establishments to interrogate their historical information to allow us to compare current trends with those of the previous year. Only seven prisons have been able to submit this historical data. For some the information was not in a retrievable state. For others, however, it was felt that resources could not be spared to compile the information or to make it available for project staff to collate.

To further support effective reporting we also asked for monthly 'snapshot' data, capturing individual prison populations and the entitlements to visits, plus ethnicity data of the prison population and of those receiving visits.

This occasional data allowed us to compare actual visits as a ratio of entitlements to visits and also to identify any ethnicity trends requiring further evaluation.

## Data Reporting

The project issued its first review of visits data in early 2008, producing data from the last three months of 2007. Since that time the project has provided quarterly updates, including increased numbers of prisons and varying the style of presentation to explore different approaches.

The basic measurement is of the total number of visits taking place and mapping how that data has changed since our records began. The reports include similar mapping of the actual visitors, including two age groups for children – under and over 10 years of age. With a different technique the project has been presenting 'snapshot' pictures of visiting capacity at each establishment - that is, an analysis of the number of visits that a prison can provide against the potential demand of its individual population, derived from entitlements to visits. Whilst it is clearly not the case that prisons should assume and facilitate the maximum possible level of demand, this methodology does allow like-for-like comparisons of prisons' capacities and some assessment of how capacity can affect delivery.

The project believes that standardised data capture, reporting and the routine review of visits based data should form a fundamental part of the service and performance management of a prison establishment. The following pages include examples of the reporting methodologies used, details of prevailing trends in the West Midlands, and examples of how this data has been, and can continue to be, used to benefit local, regional and national management.



## West Midlands Data Trends

The project has compiled complete data from seven participating prisons in the West Midlands (figure 3) which allows us to compare monthly and whole year data from January 2007 to the end of December 2008. This data sample shows us that total visits in 2008 are 5% lower than those in the previous year. In 2007 these prisons delivered 79259 visits but that figure is down to 75274 for 2008.

Generally the trend has been for consistent falls in visits, month on month, with only occasional narrowing of the gap between the two years. In the 7th period (note that for consistency the data is split into 13 equal 28 day periods) the two lines crossed, with 2008 figures matching 2007. This, however, was a coincidence of a drop in that period in 2007 and a temporary spike in the same month of 2008.

Looking at the most recent trend shows that in the last three periods of 2008 visits numbers were 3.6% below the same period in the previous year. However, when looking at how volumes have progressed since these records began a more worrying trend is visible with the last quarter in 2008 nearly 11% below the first in 2007.

Elsewhere in this report are details of the work done with individual establishments to improve visits facilities and practices and so it is important to look separately at these locations to see whether that work has had any differing impact on visiting trends. Four of the original five pilot prisons were able to retrieve historical data for the project.

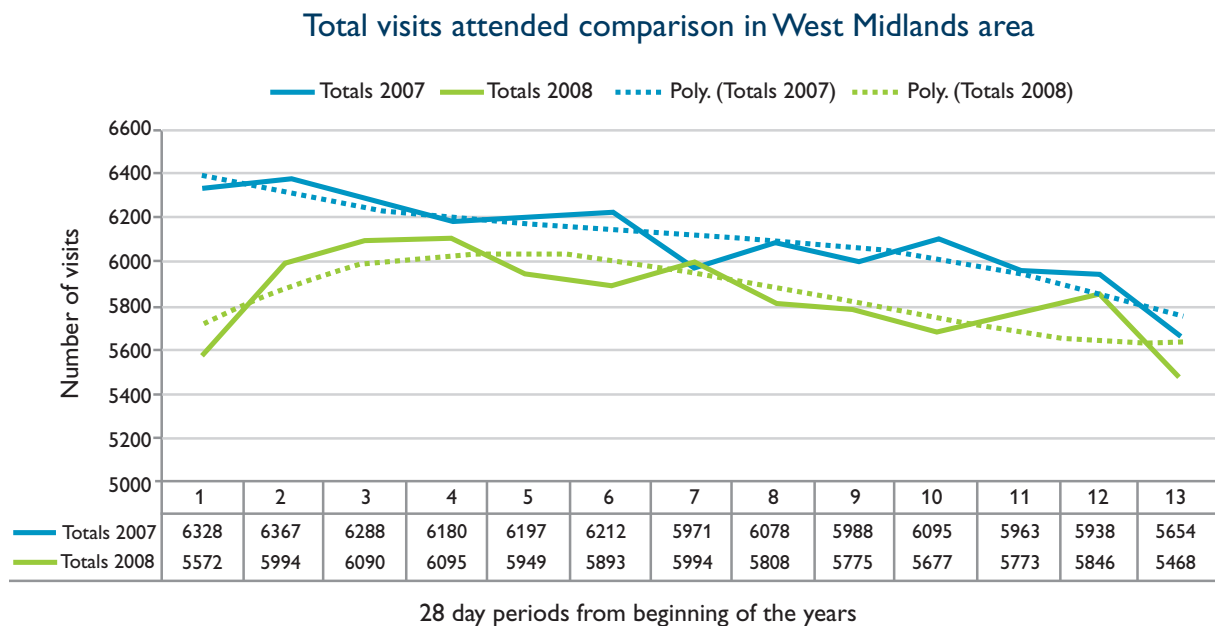


Figure 3 – Total visits at seven West Midlands prisons from January 2007 to December 2008.



### Comparison of four pilot prisons for attended visits

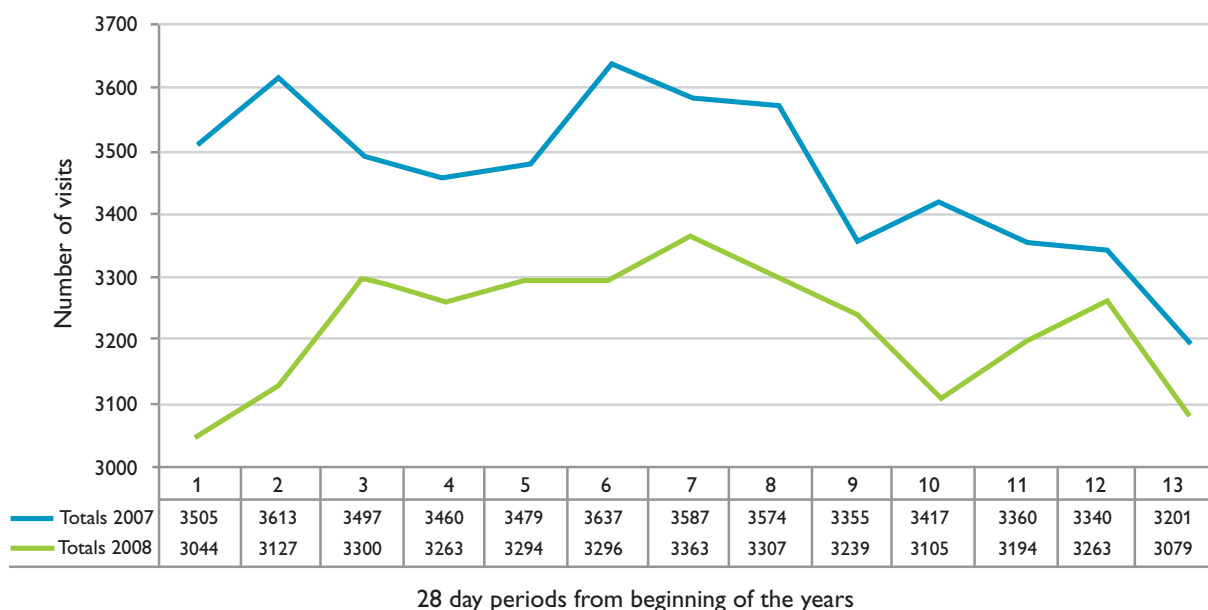


Figure 4 – Total visits at four pilot prisons.

Across the four prisons, in total, the attendance in 2008 is 8.8% lower than in the previous year. Three establishments show downturns of between 8.7% and 14%, whilst one achieved an increase of around 13%. At the commencement of the project an objective was set of achieving increases in visits of 7%. This has clearly not been achieved.

There are no conclusive answers for this steady fall in visits. Prison management will routinely refer to the impact of increases in prison population leading to wider dispersal of prisoners and the resultant effect on the ability of visitors to travel longer distances. Clearly this will have some effect but quantifying the extent is extremely difficult from the information available. What we can reflect is that in this sample the actual population increase over the two years was less than 1%. It follows that prisoner location has been an issue in the wider prison estate with reported higher incidence of prisoners needing to be housed further from home than would be possible when there is spare capacity within the system.

## Equality of visits

The project was careful to ensure that it explored the equality of visits and did so by specifying reporting mechanisms that would allow this. Each establishment was asked to provide monthly figures for the ethnicity breakdown of its population and also to conduct a one week sample each month of the ethnicity of prisoners receiving visits. Statistics showed consistently that there was very little variation in representation across visits. In samples from up to twelve prisons, from which the BME resident population accounted for 32% of prisoners, those same BME groups utilised a little over 34% of the visits delivered. Throughout the project’s sample exercises this overall trend varied little, with any differences being small and always in favour of BME groups.

In isolation, individual establishments showed some slightly wider variations with the most typical trend being for slight under-representation of black prisoners with corresponding over-representation of Asian prisoners. These variations were invariably in ranges below 3%. Occasional higher incidence were explored by the project but no issues of concern were found. One occurrence, for example, arose with a 9% under-representation of black prisoners at HMP Drake Hall but this derived from the comparatively high numbers of black foreign national prisoners who were themselves less likely to be receiving visits.

Throughout its work the project reported regional and local variations in its quarterly reports and explored any apparent discrepancies as appropriate.

## Distance from home

The project’s survey of prisoners who did NOT receive visits highlighted the importance of travel considerations as being an inhibitor to families visiting prisons. Of 330 prisoners surveyed across five establishments, 66% said that their families wished to visit but were unable to, and of those 218 prisoners, 180 said that this was due to the distance of travel or the costs associated with it. The project has not assessed these responses to analyse the actual costs or distance of travel in each case. It is not therefore possible to identify from this sample whether there were more convenient prisons in which these offenders could have been located.

No visits in preceding six months (sample 330)			
Wanting visits	218 (66%)	NOT wanting visits	112 (34%)
Distance/cost	180 (54%)	Lost contact with family	39 (12%)
Inconvenience	29 (9%)	Prisoner doesn’t want	35 (11%)
Visit system problem	9 (3%)	Family doesn’t want	23 (7%)
		No family	8 (2%)
		Other	7 (2%)

Figure 5 – Survey of prisoners not receiving visits.



It is generally recognised that as the prison estate nears capacity, the pressures of identifying spaces for new prisoners mean that the population becomes more dispersed from what might be considered as 'local to home'. There is, however, no data readily available to illustrate the status of a prison's population in terms of its distance from home. The project identified the potential for some form of 'locality index' but was unable within its own resources to design and test a model.

However, the concept would appear to be a sound one with a potential range of benefits. An indexed score for each prison, periodically updated, would allow easy identification and tracking of trends. Methods for creation could be based on postcodes or pure distance from home. More creative still would be travel time or cost based indicators. Even in its simplest form an index could form part of a suite of management information to support planning and delivery of visits within a target driven framework. Locality indexing would be a useful 'mitigator' against which variations in visits numbers could be weighed. This, in turn would concentrate attention on the extent to which prisoner distance from home is affecting the maintaining of family ties. The existence of a measure could then also lead to greater strategic targeting of prisoner relocation programmes, most importantly perhaps to allow a more structured approach to the population of new capacity within the prison system.

So, whilst distance from home is an understandable inhibitor to visiting, the prison system does not have any mechanism for measuring this factor, or whether it is in fact the reason for falling visiting numbers. What has been clear is that prison management at national and local level does not look at prison visiting in any concerted manner, in order to set acceptable or desirable levels of delivery. The project found that local managers routinely recognise the desirability of full visiting sessions and for the adoption of systems and facilities to encourage visits. However, ability or willingness to implement change to achieve this was less consistent. In some instances staff have taken a keen interest in the project's data and the proposals that have flowed from it. In others, there has been very real difficulty in getting system changes implemented, even on occasions where management have stated their intention to do so.



## Influencing local change – Example one

Whilst the graphs show the downward trend in visits numbers it provides no indications of factors which may contribute to the trend. In its regular reports the project utilised a visual presentation of visits capacities along with potential and real demand for visits in order to help illustrate ‘pinch points’ in the provision of visits at each prison. These pie charts proved very illustrative in some key areas which, again, had not been previously identified or explored within the establishments.

An explanation, and example, of this approach can be seen in figure 6.

This example illustrates the potential negative impacts of decisions being made about visiting arrangements in the absence of clear data. The establishment operated afternoon visits split into two sessions of one hour each. Through observation, local management recognised that sessions were being underutilised and made changes to their schedules, combining the afternoon into one session of two hour visits. This created a saving on the resources needed to manage two sessions, with two arrivals of visitors and the necessary administration and security implications.

As a result, the capacity (28 day) fell from 1600 visits to 760, not enough to allow for the maintaining of the previous levels of utilisation. What was also lost was the flexibility that the previous system allowed, with visitors no longer able to opt for the later afternoon session. Numbers of visits fell from 785 to 624, a fall of more than 20% and only now achieving 25% against the potential demand. Some capacity was lost to cancellations or non-attendance, again probably due to the loss of flexibility.

Having identified this negative impact the FDM Project Manager met with the prison’s Governor and some of his management team. Corrective measures were identified and actioned. In this instance, the visiting hall had space for additional tables to be added and by June 2008 these had been increased from 40 to 50, increasing the monthly capacity to 1000. Visits capacity is due to increase further in 2009, even more important with the addition of a new wing at the prison due towards the end of 2008.

The HMCIP report for the prison, published in early 2009 after an audit in the Summer of 2008, recorded these developments;

*“The (FDM) report for the first quarter of 2008 showed that [the prison] had reduced the total number of visit sessions by half, having combined two one-hour sessions into a single visit. It had, however, increased the number of visits available at every session from 40 to 50 in mid-April 2008, with the intention to increase to 63.”*

In its latest figures for December 2008, the prison’s visit numbers are greatly increased, to a new high of 840. It should be noted, however, that this only returns to the previous level of 30% of the potential demand, due to increases in the prison’s population with the completion of a new wing. Again, the figures suggest that visit numbers could well be increased further with the addition of new capacity, with almost no spare capacity within the current arrangements.

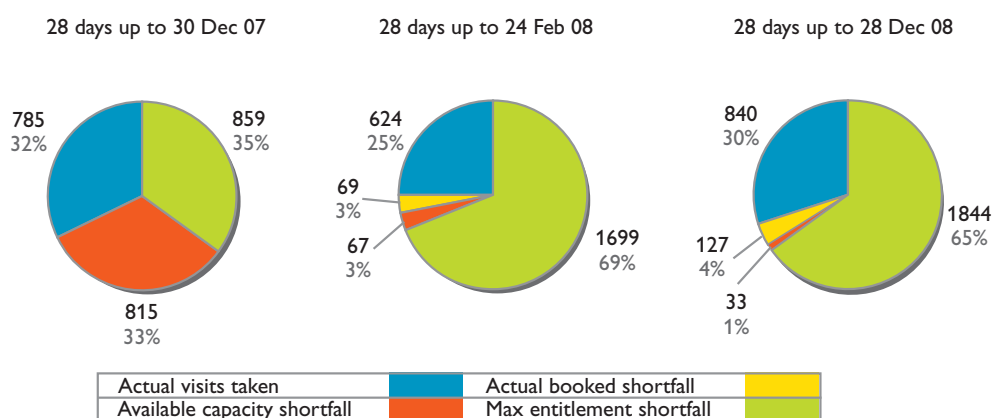




Figure 6 – Measuring capacity and demand for visits (example one).

In each instance the whole circle represents the total number of visits that the prison's population are entitled to. This was calculated by 'snapshot' data on a monthly basis which illustrated the volume of prisoners on each level of entitlement.

The blue area shows the number of visits delivered, the yellow shows the number that were booked but did not proceed, and the orange section shows the volume of spare capacity within the visits hall remaining unused.



Note: Dark green segment in Dec 08 shows a new data set for foreign national impacts.

This example shows the impact of a change in the visits schedule. A reduction in the number of visits offered in January 07 is reflected in the reduction in the second chart's orange coloured 'spare capacity' segment. Note also the substantial reduction in numbers of visits taking place. Within a further two months the spare capacity had reduced to 1% as visitors adjusted their use to the new arrangements with visit numbers improved from the low of 624 but still well below the previous averages of around 780. Highlighting this impact through these charts allowed the project to influence local management to make adjustments to their systems. In this case more tables were added to increase the capacity at each session. By June 2008 things had begun to improve, with attendances recovering to figures close to the previous levels and some spare capacity being restored. The third chart shows the situation in December 08 with new tables added and delivery now well beyond the previous numbers.



In this instance the project can illustrate a recent impact on visits at [the prison], of an increase of around 6.5% against previous levels.

This example highlights that the maintenance and analysis of such data is an important tool for managing visit activity. Not only as a driver for increasing visits and thus contributing to maintaining family ties, but also to facilitate planning of resource efficiency exercises within establishments. In this case, the original changes were implemented in the absence of clarity of the impacts, the data having not been explored in advance of making the decision. In some cases it may well be a necessary action to reduce visits capacity, particularly in order to maximise efficiency. It is essential, however, that such decisions are made with the aid of relevant data and impacts analysis to allow proper costs versus benefits analysis to be undertaken.

In other examples, the project's data has been used to plan changes to schedules, with local managers seeking guidance on the most appropriate changes in light of prevailing data.

## Influencing local change – Example two

On other occasions the project has been less successful in influencing change despite utilising the available data to illustrate potential positive actions.

When initiated, one of the project’s stated objectives was to increase the volume of visits by 7%. When our data collection protocols were in place it was apparent that there was a trend of reducing volumes of visits generally, but that a single establishment’s downward trend had a large impact on the region as a whole, and on our pilot prisons’ sample in particular. Figure 7 shows data for that prison in terms of the total visits attended for 2007 and 2008.

The overall comparison shows a reduction in visits at this single prison of 8%. This reduction in 2008 equates to more than 2000 less visits per year, a figure which represents precisely half of the total reduction across the four pilot prisons for which we have data.

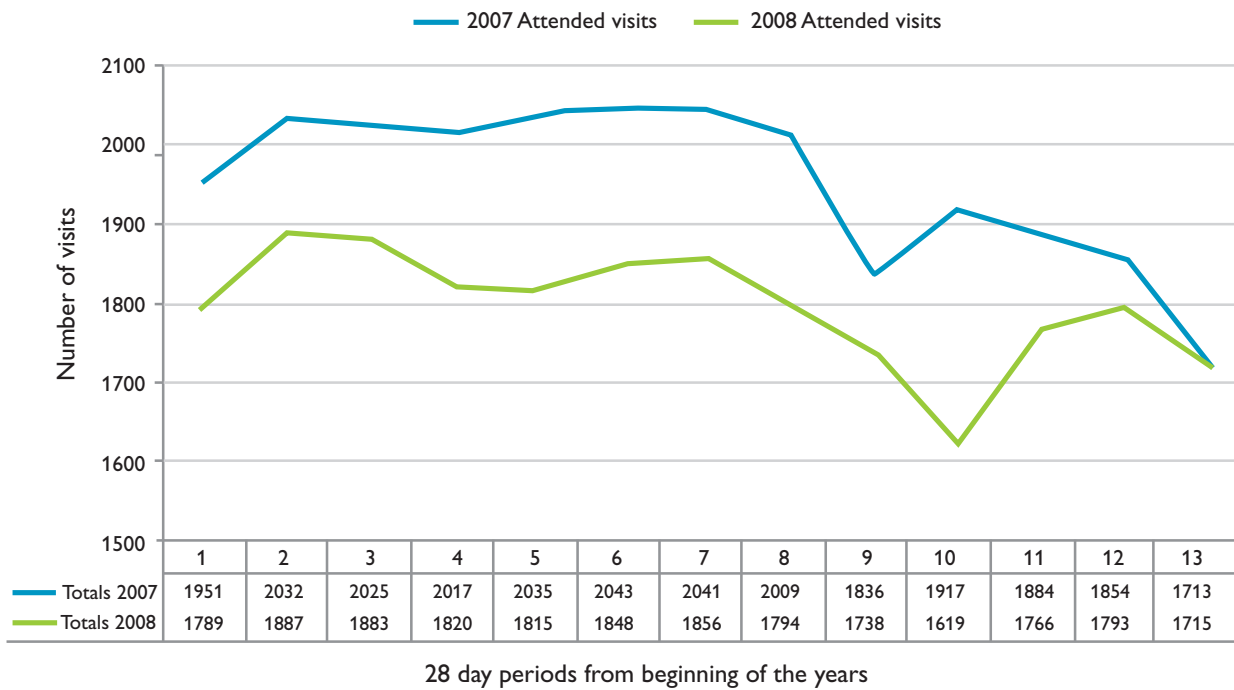


Figure 7 – Example two visits trends 2007/2008.



When analysing the pie charts the project noted two specific areas of interest. Firstly, the spare capacity was low compared to the other pilot prisons, and the proportion of visits which were booked but which did not then proceed was around twice that of elsewhere. The two issues, separately and together, illustrated potential 'pinch points' which justified further analysis. A cancelled or 'non-attendance' visit is a potential wasted opportunity, especially when it might deny another prisoner a visit. With only small levels of capacity not utilised, it is likely that across the range of visits sessions there are instances where sessions are fully booked meaning that there is likely to be unmet demand, where those seeking to book visits have been unable to do so.

The project explored this further with additional samples of the booking process and analysis of bookings for individual sessions. It is estimated that upwards of 250, and probably as many as half, of the 840 sessions in 2008 may have been fully booked and therefore at some point closed for additional callers. It is impossible to obtain precise figures due to an anomaly of the records system, by which in the afternoon preceding a visits session a final check is done of booked visits. At that point, prisoners who have been moved from the prison – and as a large local prison there is a high level of prisoner movement – are removed from the bookings. At this stage, however, there is no potential to rebook that visit slot to another prisoner. However, ratios of full sessions from a survey conducted by project staff suggest that more than half of all sessions were fully booked, with 29% of mornings, 20% of evenings and as high as 86% of afternoon sessions having to be closed to new bookings at some point.

The project's survey of the booking process further showed that, on average, these sessions were closed to further bookings four days in advance and in some instances as far as eight days ahead.

It was also identified that 'non-attendance', as distinct from prisoner movement, was a major factor in the relatively high levels of visits booked but not proceeding. The project's analysis identified some potential contributing factors to this scenario. The prison operates a flexible booking system which combines a 'Visiting Order free' system with the freedom to book visits up to 28 days in advance. The traditional system for arranging visits (and which is in operation in all but two West Midlands prisons) involves the prisoner being issued with a number of Visiting Orders which they then send to their chosen visitor. This acts as a 'voucher' to allow that individual to visit and needs to be presented with proof of identify at the visit itself.

At this prison, the prisoner provides a list of the friends and family that he wants to receive visits from. Any of those individuals can then book a visit up to the maximum that the prisoner is entitled to. They do not get issued with an allocation of the prisoner's visits and have total freedom to book as they please. This approach is extremely flexible for all concerned and more efficient than one which requires individual paperwork for each visit. Adding to the flexibility was the freedom for visitors to book up to 28 days in advance.

However, it is a system which has some pitfalls, and these are highlighted in an environment where demand for visits outstrips supply. In such a situation, a single friend or family member could theoretically book an entire month's allocation of visits in one go. Apart from preventing others from visiting, this scenario involves the risk that the individual may choose later to not utilise a visit, either due to commitments changing over the lengthy period or simply by deciding that they personally did not need or wish to visit again as intended. In fact, there is some anecdotal evidence that this system has been used by some visitors to deliberately book all of the available visits specifically to prevent someone else from visiting the prisoner. Ultimately, unless the individual contacted the visitor centre to notify them of their change of plans, the visit would remain booked, and the table unused.

Morning sessions were the least popular and, in exploring this, a contributing factor was identified. Visits centre staff reported that visitors had commented on the problems experienced with dropping children off at school prior to utilising morning visits and that this small security window had discouraged attendance. The morning visits operated between 9am and 11.15am. Visitors booked in at the visitor centre and then crossed to the prison gate to pass through security. The prison had a policy of requiring all visitors to be screened by the drug dog. In order to maximise the dog's effectiveness the length of time the dog could be used for was limited to thirty minutes. As a result the prison operated a 'security window' of thirty minutes, generally from 9am until 9.30am. In other prisons more flexible systems were often in operation, either with a dog working a longer shift or by using the dog for random searching.

All of this data gave indications of potential unmet demand for visits. As a result the project made four recommendations to the prison which it was felt could contribute to improving the numbers of attended visits, to both contribute to maintaining prisoners' family ties and also to make more efficient use of the existing system;

- The security window for morning sessions should be widened to allow greater flexibility of arrival time for potential visitors.
- The system allowing booking 28 days in advance should be revised, at the least to identify those who abused the system by not attending when scheduled.
- A system should be introduced to notify booking staff of the movement of prisoners, to allow them to identify opportunities to reuse previously booked visits slots.
- The visits hall capacity should be increased and/or a system of 'overbooking' should be implemented to maximise attendance within the current capacity.

The objective of the prison **should** be to maximise the usage of its existing visiting capacity. The prevailing trend for 2008 was that over 13% of visits booked did not take place. The twin problems of high prisoner movement numbers and visitors failing to attend pre-booked visits could be tackled by the combination of measures proposed. At the same time a system of 'overbooking' could be introduced to allow the booking team to have a more flexible approach to achieve the maximum usage more regularly. Throughout the whole of 2008 there was only a single occasion when 40 visits took place, and only two others when 39 were achieved. To offset any perceived risk the project also recommended that the prison utilised some existing space within the visits hall to set up four reserve tables, allowing bookings up to 44 but with the security that should more than 40 attend there would be space to facilitate them. Ultimately the project would have wished for the prison to seek to permanently increase its capacity to 44 and to utilise that number of tables fully but the intermediate alternative proposed allowed for some improvements without raising issues of security and staffing larger numbers of visits that would inevitably follow.





Experiences with the prison reflect some of the challenges around working with prisons within the Children and Family pathway. The flow of data had often been unreliable, both in terms of timeliness and accuracy. In fact, audits of the data received at one point showed an error rate of over 60%. Lines of ownership for activity surrounding visits were sometimes unclear with management responsibility changing on a number of occasions and, understandably, other prison business commitments disrupting continuity and time available to this work. At one point, a new manager confirmed his agreement with all of the recommendations and intention to action them but, ultimately, this did not proceed when he left the establishment soon after.

Of all of the recommendations the prison has only recently initiated one of them, the widening of the morning security window, although this was partly influenced by changes to the prison's core day. This change has had a small, but immediate, positive impact to attendances in morning sessions. In the two months at the end of 2008 for which this change had been fully in place, attendances at morning sessions have been up by around 10%.

The project estimates that had the prison been able to implement all of the proposed changes then real increases in total visits of around 15% could have been achieved, which alone would have delivered the overall 7% increase in visits that the project was seeking to realise through its work.

This example illustrates how data can be utilised to identify opportunities to improve attendance numbers. Elsewhere, this report will include details of facilities and system changes which can also contribute to improving the visitor experience. That the prison has, as yet, been unable to exploit these opportunities by making system alterations is an illustration itself of the continued challenges faced in the attempts to raise the profile and importance of such issues.



### The project recommends...

- An IT based visits data capture system to be introduced.
- A 'population locality index' be created to allow accurate monitoring of the impacts of population movement on 'distance from home'.
- A methodology for local, regional and national visits performance reporting (KPIs) be devised including creating prison 'family groups' for comparison.
- Headline targets to be defined including;
  - capacity to deliver visits as a ratio of population.
  - visits volumes achieved.
- Consideration given to setting standards and targets for enhanced family visiting.
- 'Visits teams' of officers and staff be introduced in each establishment to allow targeted training to improve the quality of service delivered.

## Improving facilities for visitors

The project's engagement with its pilot prisons led to the identification of opportunities to make physical improvements to visits areas, most specifically in the provision of children's play areas and equipment. Later in the project's lifecycle, as links were made with other West Midlands prisons, additional work was completed at two other sites. The following section illustrates some of the improvements achieved, in which the project provided advice, design input, sourcing of materials and equipment and the necessary funding.



*HMP Hewell Visitor Centre*



*Signage for Play Areas*



*HMP Featherstone*



*HMP Shrewsbury Play Area*



*HMP & YOI Drake Hall Play Area*



## Testimonial

Families Do Matter has been invaluable, offering sound advice on every aspect of the visits procedure and working with us to identify low resource adjustments in the area, which has greatly improved the visits experience for both the prisoner and their visitors.

Changes that were introduced over the period of the project include:

- Structural changes that opened out the visits area to improve the atmosphere.
- Improvements to the facilities for children during visits.
- A new, more suitable, children's area.
- Changes to entry and exit procedures to improve the quality of the visitor experience.
- Introduction of a system to allow the booking of subsequent visits during visits sessions.

Visits data has been evaluated and we have been able to focus efforts in areas that were in need of improvement, including support and guidance on improving the special children's visits and signposting towards Children and Family services advisors in the community, which has improved our ability to provide support to families caring for prisoners' children.

**Lisa Garnett, Head of Offender Management HMP&YOI Drake Hall**



## The project recommends...

That all visitor centres and visits halls should, where possible, provide child friendly areas, maintained to appropriate standards and equipped with toys and other resources suitable for a range of age groups. Consideration should be given to initial grant funding of £2500-£5000 per site and prisons required thereafter to maintain the facilities.

## Family Information

### Visitor Centre information

The project completed a series of reviews and refurbishments at Visitor Centres at the pilot prisons, aimed at improving the clarity and presentation of key information. Nearly 60% of visitors surveyed at the start of the project revealed that they did not read posters and information on display at visitor centres, saying that there was too much and it was not interestingly displayed.

Initial visits utilised users' and staff opinions and on-site observations to compile reports on each location. Much of the information on display was found to be old and no longer relevant and often there was far too much information, making it difficult to discern the important from the mundane. This excerpt from the project's Communication Officer's review:

*“Display was not organised, random notices obscured other notices, some were dated from the 1990s and displays were often dishevelled – yellowing paper, curled corners, stuck on with tape, hanging off. Notices were generally in a poor state, unorganised and gave a poor impression.”*

A range of preparatory steps were taken in order to achieve the objective of rationalising information to improve effectiveness:

- Internet research on public information display principles, Plain English, fonts, paper type etc.
- Focus Group for HMPS staff and voluntary agencies.
- 'Trial' notices and noticeboards and feedback from FDM and focus group.

After consultation a model was adopted of lockable cabinets and FDM commissioned 'mounting boards' utilising images to emphasise the themes of messages. The discipline was adopted of each noticeboard location within the Visitor Centre being dedicated to a single subject matter.

An audit was conducted at each site of all of the current content on display and opportunities taken to reduce information levels. Where appropriate, standard templates for notices were designed to be used at all sites to reduce duplication and inaccuracies. At the conclusion of the refurbishment the project produced handover packs in hard and electronic copy form to assist each establishment to allow for easy updating of notices. Site visits since the work, have confirmed that in general each site has maintained the protocols and disciplines of the new approach.





Mounting board – Can we help you?



Poster – A day in the life of...



Mounting board – Getting here...



### The project recommends...

That all visitor centres and visitor reception locations should adopt quality standards for the display and provision of family information. These disciplines should be stated within visitor centre specifications and audited by HMPS management.



## Promoting Assisted Prison Visits Unit – pilot exercise

The Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU), part of HMPS, administers the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVS) which provides financial help to assist with the costs of visiting a prisoner, upon application, to those eligible to receive it.

*1.2 The aim of the assisted prison visits scheme is to promote family ties and reflect the Prison Service mission statement by "...helping prisoners lead law abiding lives in prison and upon release." The principles on which the scheme is operated are to ensure a fair balance is struck between safeguarding public monies and ensuring that family ties are maintained.*

*1.3 To qualify, a visitor must live in England, Wales or Scotland; be closely related to the prisoner or be the prisoner's partner or only visitor; and be in receipt of a low income. This Order sets out the criteria to be met and any exceptions which may apply.*

*1.4 Help towards the cost of travel, an overnight stay, childminding and light refreshments are approved for up to twenty-six visits per qualifying visitor per year. Rates of payment will be reviewed annually.*

Excerpt from PSO 4405 – Assisted Prison Visits

Surveys of prisoners and visitors conducted by project staff within the pilot prisons in late 2006, demonstrated a lack of awareness of the existence of the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme, with 38% saying that they had not heard of the scheme and 86% having never tried to access the scheme. The surveys also demonstrated that the costs of travel for visits was often significant and a concern for many visitors, potentially impacting upon the number of visits a family may be able to afford (see also 'Distance from home' – page 30).

Visits Centres did have posters displayed and application booklets were generally available. However, during the general review of Visits Centre information it was identified that APVU publicity materials were neither given appropriate prominence, nor were the materials themselves strongly branded to aid visibility and appeal.

To complement the information review at the pilot locations, the project commissioned new APVS publicity materials, professionally designed with a strong colour scheme. Simple transport imagery themes were utilised for a suite of materials of a leaflet and posters. These materials, again, were designed in consultation with a focus group of stakeholders.

Basic principles for publicising the scheme were agreed, including provision of leaflets to all new prisoners, placement of leaflets at telephone points within prison accommodation and copies being sent out with all Visiting Orders. At Visits Centres, visitors' attention was drawn to the posters and leaflets handed out.

This approach was policed from July to September 2007 with project staff attending visitor centres and reinforcing to staff the importance of the service and the need to continue to prominently display materials and engage with visitors.



## Findings

Results from the exercise showed an immediate and substantial improvement in applications to APVU. The graph below (figure 8) shows the increase across the five prisons individually and collectively of applications for financial assistance. This illustrates a nearly threefold increase over the period, rising from 64 in April to June, to 167 in the following three months of the exercise.

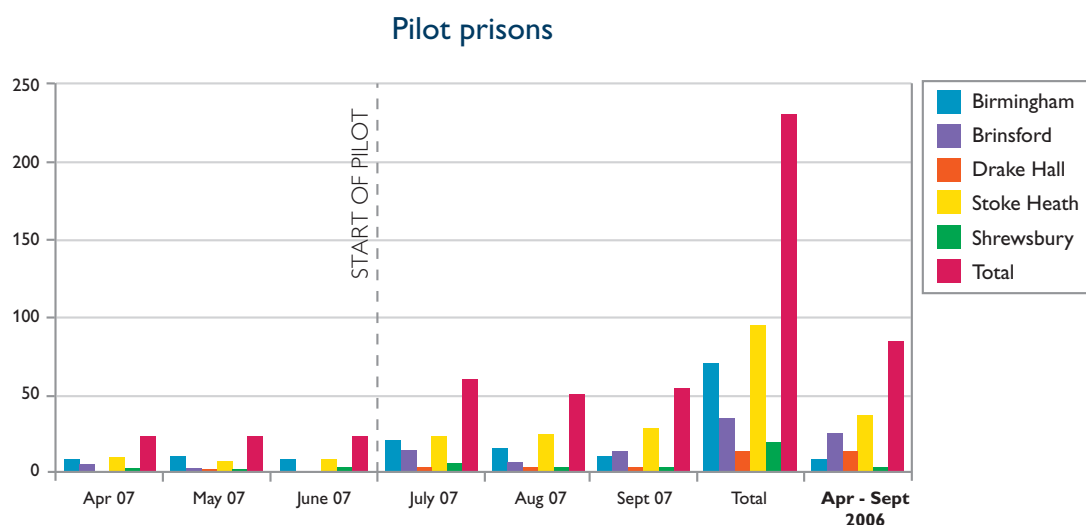


Figure 8 – applications for APVS support at pilot prisons.

Whilst locations expressed a more engaged and interested audience, these figures provided by APVU themselves, illustrate the real impact of the publicity campaign. Particularly noticeable are the comparative figures for the same period in the previous year. To further explore comparisons a sample was taken from other West Midlands establishments during the same time period to identify if similar trends had occurred due to any activity unrelated to the pilot. That analysis (figure 9) confirms that other establishments did not experience corresponding changes in applications for funding support.

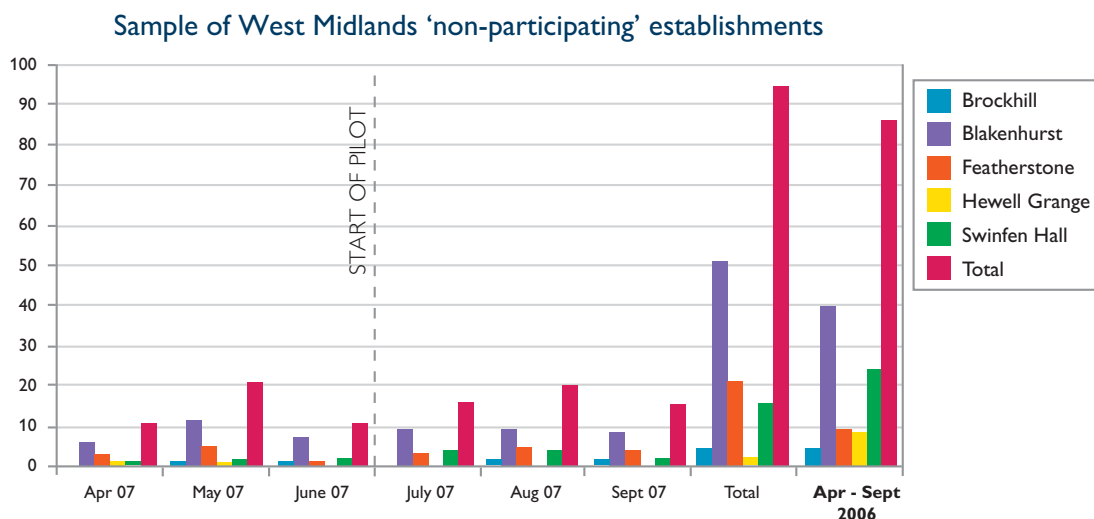


Figure 9 – applications for APVS support at other prisons.

It is clearly safe to conclude that the publicity exercise had a strong positive impact on applications for, and the provision of, funding support to eligible visitors. APVU report that the vast majority of new claims were successful. It is not possible to explore whether the support led to individual visits taking place which would otherwise not have, or whether it simply provided a beneficial financial outcome to those who would have visited even without the support. In either event, the outcome is a positive one with, as a minimum, people of low income receiving the financial support that they are eligible for.

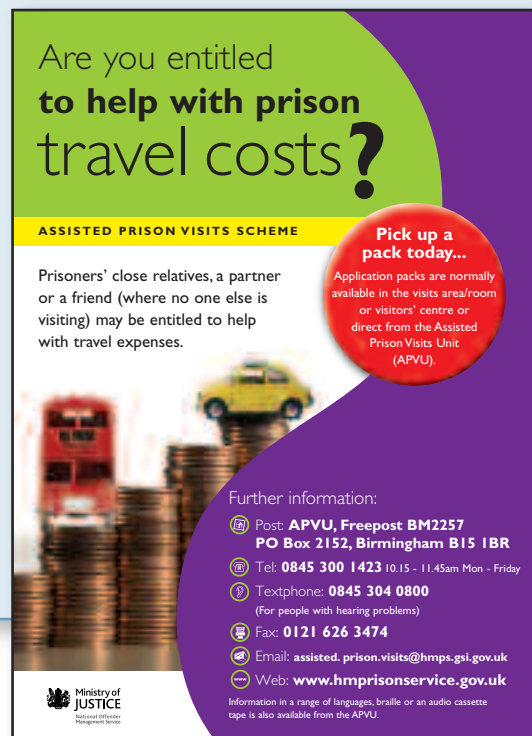
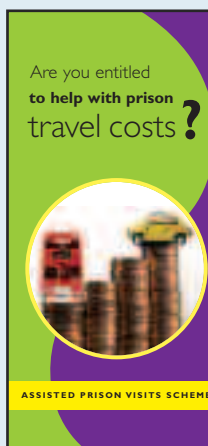
The exercise also confirms that in this random sample within the West Midlands, the existing publicity materials, and the use of them within prisons, is failing to achieve its potential.



## The project recommends...

APVU have now adopted the project's materials for their national publicity in place of those previously used. The data here shows that prison establishments should adopt a more structured approach to the use of these materials including:

- prominent display of posters at all entry points and key locations on the visitor's route.
- inclusion of leaflets in all prisoner induction packs and in first time visitor packs.
- availability of leaflets at visitor reception points.
- regular reminders to visits reception staff to ask visitors if they have considered the availability of APVS.





## Family Information Packs

There is no shortage of information available for families of prisoners regarding the prison and visiting processes in England and Wales. Most is locally produced by individual prisons, providing location specific information as well as more generic rules for visitors. In some prisons these take the form of booklets of information whilst in others there may be a number of separate leaflets, either professionally produced or photocopied. The way they are distributed will also vary, with some being sent to every new family as part of an induction process, and some simply being available for visitors on arrival or to prisoners within their house blocks.

At a more strategic level there is a large amount of well produced information which has been typically developed by organisations like Action for Prisoners' Families, Omiston Trust, Nacro and other voluntary sector agencies. This information takes the form of booklets produced with specific audiences and themes in mind. As independently produced material there is, however, no form of oversight or strategy for production, save for the identification within the organisation concerned of an apparent gap in what is currently available.

There is no package of materials that is either prescribed or can be looked upon as 'best practice' and, once again, this has allowed for a lot of creativity within the system. However, with such a wide range of materials available it is clear that visitors experience inconsistent levels of information and this is most keenly felt when prisoners transfer within the prison estate. Similarly, the best practice principles which commonly apply to the presentation of information, in terms of accessibility, are often lost amongst the range of independently generated materials.

The project undertook an audit of all visits related information materials used within the West Midlands prison establishments in order to identify preferences but also to explore the opportunity to define some form of best practice, either pre-existing or not.

The externally produced materials included;

### Children's Story Books/Teenager's Magazines

- *Danny's Mum* (APF)
- *Tommy's Dad* (APF)
- *Finding Dad* (APF)
- *It's a Tough Time for Everyone* (APF/Barnardos/NI Prison Service)
- *My Dad's in Prison*
- *Visiting My Mum* (Ormiston)
- *Visiting My Dad* (Ormiston)
- *My Visit* (PACT)

### For Partners and Families

- *The Outsiders – Sent to Prison/Living with Separation/ Telling the Children/Preparing for Release* (APF)
- *Outside Help* (APF/Nacro)

### For Prisoners

- *Staying Close* (APF) – available for male and female prisoners



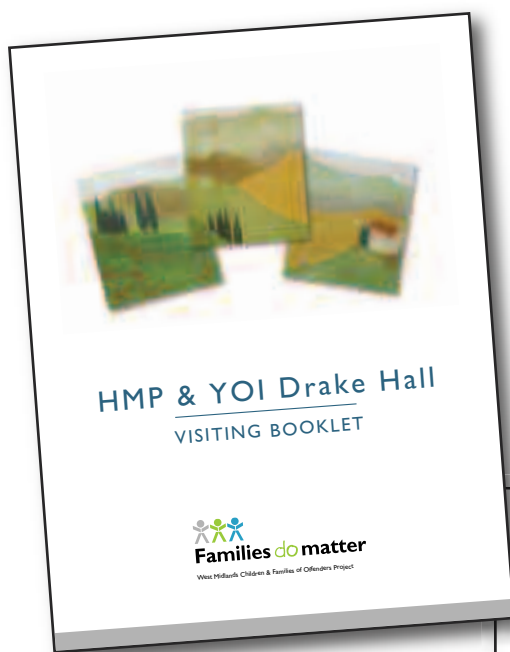
At present these booklets are available to families to order, sometimes free, but are not offered nationally to all family members as part of an induction programme. Prisons themselves may sometimes have supplies of these books that they have purchased and may choose to hand out. It was apparent that in some instances at prisons, families were being provided with very detailed and often complicated local information, particularly around the visits procedure and security issues and rules. In other locations there was a clear effort being made to provide simple and clear information in a format that would be accessible to visitors of a range of age groups and educational levels. Recognition of this type of inconsistency led to the recent introduction of *Custody - What Next?* a booklet now widely available at all courts aimed at families of offenders receiving prison sentences. This booklet was developed initially by the Thames Valley Partnership in the South East region and was adopted as good practice by NOMS.

Of all of the approaches in place within the West Midlands, the project identified some simple principles of best practice. It was felt that there were two key points for the provision of visits specific information provided by the prison; immediately on induction of a prisoner and then on arrival of a visitor at a first visit. The project identified a pre-existing booklet in use at HMP The Wolds, designed by the Family Learning Team which includes prisoner representatives. The booklet, written in simple language, attempts to impart key visiting information but also through the use of photographs of the establishment itself provides a little familiarisation and detail of life at the prison.

The FDM project has facilitated a reworking of the concept for use in one of its prisons, HMPYOI Drake Hall, as a pilot for a best practice approach. The booklets have now been produced and are in use at the prison.

They follow the same principles as the original, serving the purpose of imparting visiting rules and arrangements with the inclusion of a map and contact details, including travelling advice. Photographs illustrate the visitor's journey through the visiting process and show the facilities available including the children's play area. The booklet also shows pictures of the prisoner's own environment and includes simple explanations. As well as being a clear aid to visiting, the booklet can be used to help families and children, humanising the prison environment and reducing apprehension.

A booklet such as this should be provided to all prisoners on induction for them to pass to family members and also be available for all enquiries from families about visits. This core material can be added to with any more detailed information – typically found to be around security rules – at arrival for the first visit, at which point many prisons already have existing 'induction' processes and packs for first time visitors. It is also at this point that the issue of children specific materials should be addressed with the provision of one or more of the existing resources. Bringing children to a first visit is generally discouraged, allowing the family member the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the environment and rules, as well as the emotional issues potentially surrounding a first visit, and also allowing them to better facilitate a child's visit through their own knowledge.



Visiting booklet



### The project recommends...

Prisons should adopt the project's model for a visitors information booklet. Copies are available from the project's offices or from HMPYOI Drake Hall. The project is able to provide access to a template and contact details for booklet producers if prisons wish to use an external supplier.



## Summary & Recommendations

There are a number of reasons for visiting to be considered as an important and positive part of prison life. The maintenance of meaningful family ties can contribute to reducing reoffending and have potential positive impacts on family outcomes, such as those experienced by children. It can also impact upon the prisoner's own sense of well being and contribute to improving behaviour during sentence.

The resource implications of providing visits are not insignificant. As well as staffing of booking systems and the purchase of services to run the visitor centre, there is a substantial prison officer commitment to provide security to escort prisoners from cells and visitors to the visiting hall, and then to supervise the visits themselves, both in person and using remote surveillance. At the same time, visits are a major source of concern for security conscious prisons with substantial risks of drug and other contraband smuggling. So, on two counts, the management of the visiting process is an extremely important one; both in terms of the general resource commitment and the wider security implications.

In such an environment it is worthy of note that currently within NOMS there are neither systems for monitoring and reporting visiting data, nor any form of performance indicators or targets associated with them. As the project has shown, the maintenance of simple data and analysis allows for more effective management and planning of visiting activity, including identifying opportunities for system and staff efficiencies. By not having a stated policy of visits maximisation, or the discipline of a targeted approach to motivate it, the development and maintaining of good practice around visiting activity is subject to substantial local variation and largely dependent upon the inventiveness and dedication of small numbers of individual staff and managers. As a result, the quality of what is delivered varies substantially and is often subject to change, motivated by the need to service other more targeted activities. Whilst the case is made that visits are important, there are understandably more fundamental aspects of prison management that have priority. The challenge remains that a balanced, qualitative but efficient approach towards visiting provision is hampered by the lack of use of relatively simple performance indicators to support its delivery.

These issues continue into the areas of family information. The visiting process is an excellent opportunity to impart information to family members but it is again an area in which there is great inconsistency and duplication of effort. Information about the prison and visiting arrangements should be readily available in simple and clear formats with best practice approaches identified and adopted.







## The project recommends...

- An IT based visits data capture system to be introduced.
- A 'population locality index' be created to allow accurate monitoring of the impacts of population movement on 'distance from home'.
- A methodology for local, regional and national visits performance reporting (KPIs) be devised including creating prison 'family groups' for comparison.
- Headline targets to be defined including;
  - capacity to deliver visits as a ratio of population.
  - visits volumes achieved.
- Consideration given to setting standards and targets for enhanced family visiting.
- 'Visits teams' of officers and staff be introduced in each establishment to allow targeted training to improve the quality of service delivered.
- That all visitor centres and visits halls should, where possible, provide child friendly areas, maintained to appropriate standards and equipped with toys and other resources suitable for a range of age groups. Consideration should be given to initial grant funding of £2500-£5000 per site and prisons required thereafter to maintain the facilities.
- That all visitor centres and visitor reception locations should adopt quality standards for the display and provision of family information. These disciplines should be stated within visitor centre specifications and audited by HMPS management.
- Prisons should adopt the project's model for a visitors information booklet. Copies are available from the project's offices or from HMPYOI Drake Hall. The project is able to provide access to a template and contact details for booklet producers if prisons wish to use an external supplier.

# EDUCATION

## Overview

Many prisons deliver some form of Parenting and Family Relationships education but delivery across England and Wales presents a complex picture, with around 20 different programmes running across the 139 prisons nationally. There is no requirement that such interventions must be delivered but there has been a general adoption of the principle that this work can be constructive and is to be encouraged. That view is increasingly informed by the developing evidence base and the move towards a more strategic approach to delivery within the Children and Family pathway.

In every prison the wider education programme for prisoners is delivered by a supplier contracted to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), in line with the specifications of the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) Strategy. The LSC is responsible for defining national, regional and local strategy for the delivery of OLASS. From the allocation of funds to each education contractor a plan of services for each prison establishment is agreed between the provider and the prison itself. Programmes of parenting and relationship education must compete for attention with the range of other interventions delivered, such as literacy, numeracy, work skills and arts.

There remains an issue over consistency of approach with some providers routinely allocating resources to this work whilst others are not. In some instances, prison based staff, such as chaplaincy teams or voluntary organisations, will themselves opt to deliver a programme where it is not part of the education provider's plans. For this reason, some of the programmes being run remain unaccredited and can vary substantially between establishments. With 59% of men and 66% of women in prison having dependent children under the age of 18<sup>1</sup> and with 25% of boys and young men in Young Offender Institutes being fathers or likely to become such during their period in custody<sup>2</sup>, it is clear that there is a large potential audience for parenting education. Whether it should be a priority remains to be proven at this stage. The national RRAP of 2004 stated that one of its key priorities would be to 'improve the quality and quantity of education on parentcraft, family relationships, healthy living, life skills and sex education,' which included an action of 'implementing offending behaviour programmes to improve quality and experiences of offenders and their families at a local level.

Some consistency exists, such as in the Eastern region where the families' charity Ormiston provides an Open College Network (OCN) accredited programme for prisoners at 9 out of 14 prisons in the region. The other widely used programmes are devised by the charity Safeground; 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside', and OCN; 'Parentcraft' and 14 other programmes. In 2007/08 23 prisons ran Family Man/Fathers Inside. These are the programmes that are generally delivered by education contractors in some prisons.

In other establishments individuals or voluntary sector workers have developed their own courses which have not been accredited. This can lead to problems including a lack of continuity and long term funding and an unrealistic raising of expectations for prisoners undertaking them. In the West Midlands region there are currently eight prisons running a parenting or family relationships programme with four prisons not running any programmes addressing these issues. Two establishments are running Family Man, two are running OCN Parentcraft, and one is running the Family Links Nurturing Programme all as part of their education contract. Three establishments are running home-grown programmes which are run by other prison departments.

1 Home Office Research

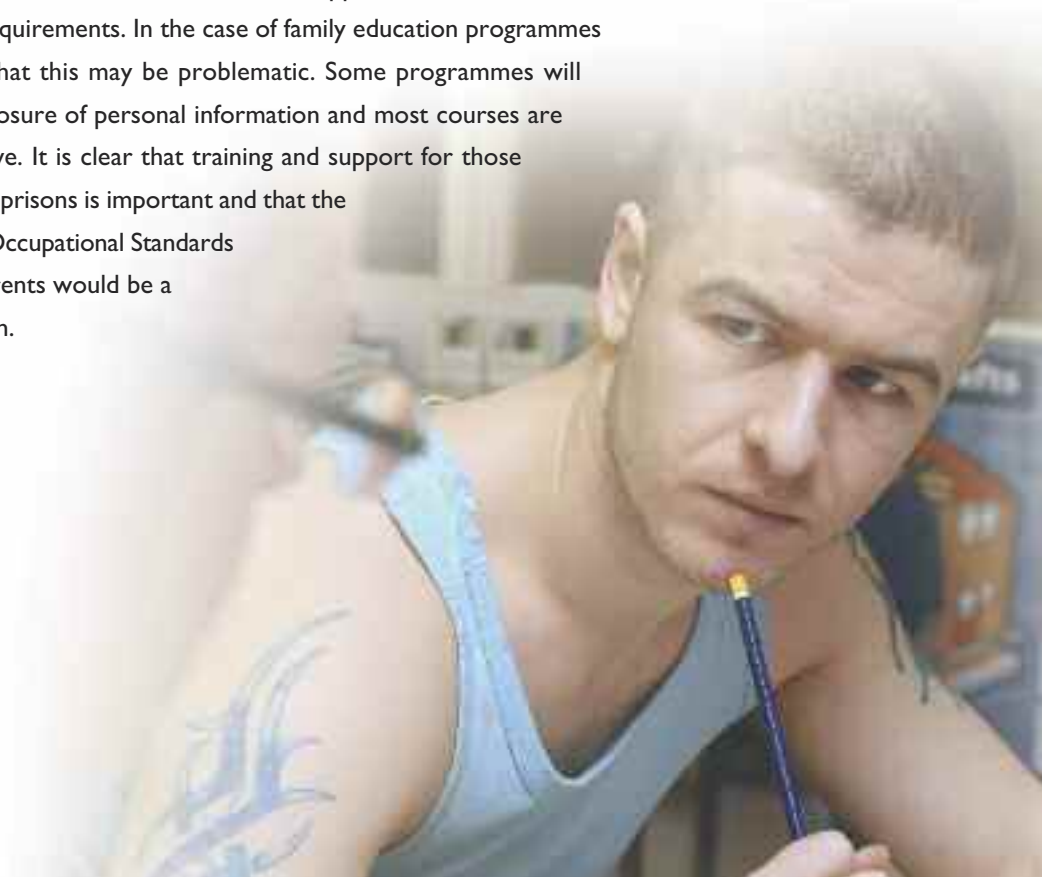
2 MOJ/DCSF *Children of Offenders Review 2007*



The families of offenders are often not involved in the parenting programmes and the offender works on plans, behaviour tactics and childcare skills in isolation often without having contact with the children or the partner involved in the care of that child. This can sometimes lead to increased tension between those inside and outside as the prisoner's 'classroom' based theoretical knowledge increases and as issues about relationships are explored.

Family learning programmes are running in a number of establishments nationally with play leaders or family support workers devising activities or programmes which enable the imprisoned parents and those caring for children outside to engage with their children, often on Family Visits or through structured Family Learning programmes. These interventions allow for shared purpose and goals and contribute to the Every Child Matters outcomes for the children in their care. Evidence also shows that they can contribute to community cohesion, creating parental involvement with schools and to parents seeking out further learning for themselves. This area of activity is well supported across Local Authorities.

Despite a national drive for practitioners to access training programmes and reach National Occupational Standards those working in prisons are often outside of the remit for accessing funding and application mechanisms which are held by Parenting Commissioners at Local Authority level. Some prison staff may have come from childcare or Family Learning backgrounds but others have undertaken delivery of courses because they had an interest in the field. In some cases unqualified staff have provided cover in order for the education supplier to continue to meet contracted delivery requirements. In the case of family education programmes it is understandable that this may be problematic. Some programmes will involve a level of disclosure of personal information and most courses are naturally highly emotive. It is clear that training and support for those delivering this work in prisons is important and that the adoption of National Occupational Standards for Working With Parents would be a meaningful progression.



## Activity Overview

The FDM project set out to improve the delivery of educational programmes in its pilot locations. After initial analysis of delivery, in the pilot prisons and in the wider prison estate, the project identified some concerns about the delivery of parenting and relationship based educational programmes.

- Selection of prisoners can be unstructured and not generally focused on the needs of the prisoner or their family with little information collected on the prisoner's family needs or experience prior to the course.
- Where family information is collected during the course there is little evidence of any clear processes for addressing any of the needs identified or passing information to other relevant departments in the prison.
- When contrasting the aims of the prisoners, tutors and funders there is evidence of confusion on the primary aim of the courses with potential tension between a strong educational focus and activities to achieve real behavioural change.
- Staff are largely untrained to deal with disclosure relating to prisoners' own childhood or current family experiences which can arise due to the nature of the training material and life experiences of some people.
- Prisoners are encouraged to plan for the future but few opportunities are included in the courses to "reality check" prisoner's aspirations or deal with any difficulties that arise as result of trying to implement plans.
- There is a lack of monitoring and robust evaluation of courses and their impact.
- There are no clear links between the current evidence base on effective delivery of courses in the community and current provision in establishments.
- There is a lack of training and support to tutors and facilitators delivering family ties training in prisons.

Joint plans were devised with each establishment to include agreed levels of programme delivery and a format for evaluation of outcomes devised by the project and implemented by the prisons themselves.

Unfortunately, delivery throughout the period was inconsistent. Establishments struggled to achieve their delivery plans due to combinations of staffing changes, issues over physical space for course delivery and more fundamental changes in the planned use of educational resources generally. Again, many of the issues highlighted, around the inconsistency of delivery and the insecure structures supporting these educational programmes, proved insurmountable at the pilot locations. Some evaluations took place and data from over 250 men who had completed the Family Man programme at HMP Birmingham was collated and analysed and found to be comparable with data collected by Safeground at HMP Wandsworth. However, on the whole data collection completion was inconsistent.



The project worked with its pilot prisons to introduce and test new programmes, including achieving accreditation to provide some of the structure and formality that was otherwise missing. At HMYOI Stoke Heath the project helped the Being Dad programme to gain accreditation through the Effective Regimes process ultimately leading to the course being regularly audited, evaluated and supported by Area Psychology. The project also aided with the accreditation of the Time for Families 'Building Stronger Families' programme which is unique in its method of engaging both the prisoner and their partner at the same time in a programme about relationships, parenting and budgeting. A course was successfully delivered for eight couples in November/ December 2008 with favourable outcomes noted by all parties. However, at HMP Featherstone, staff resource implications meant that the prison felt unable to facilitate the second course which had been approved as part of the evaluation process. This was a setback to the project and to Time for Families, with the Effective Regimes panel unable to consider the intended evaluation from the two courses in order to provide a decision on whether the course had created positive change and could contribute to a change in the attitudes, thinking and behaviour of the participants. Data has, however, been gathered from other prisons running Tff outside the region, and this too suggests a significant increase in overall relationship satisfaction. Tff are continuing to run the programme successfully in a number of prisons in the South West, London and Yorkshire & Humberside regions and are expanding their gathering of evidence to include figures on any increase in visits, cost-effectiveness and other factors relating to reducing reoffending. The uniqueness of a course which allows both partners to be involved in a parenting/relationships programme is something which should be replicated and a bigger bank of evidence gathered to prove its efficacy.

The project conducted desktop research regarding the needs of BME offenders and completed a summary report of the issues and research around the delivery of courses to BME audiences, specifically around whether they should be delivered in culture specific groups. A course for fathers of Afro-Caribbean descent was delivered at HMP Birmingham which was well received by participants but, due to low volumes and the difficulty of the prison in running further events, outcomes do not advance the debate.



#### **Prisoners' feedback from 'Baby father' Course at HMP Birmingham.**

*"I liked the fact that we didn't have to explain anything... the rest of the group got it... my background, the baby mother thing, the Jamaican values."*

*"It made me think about the part I have played in my children's life and how I have influenced their minds and ways. I am ashamed to say that that was not always a good thing and this course has made me think more about how I am a role model and need to live up to that responsibility."*

*"It's great to know that people like Neil (tutor) make time to come here and help improve a bunch of prisoners including me, this helps us and helps us improve our relationship with our children..."*

*"I may not have known this before this course but since doing this course it has made me think about my surroundings and by staying calm, a person is likely to think more clearly..."*

The project has been successful in supporting the inception and delivery of pilot programmes which have led to regular delivery despite the problems mentioned above. Family Links and the New Family Man Family Action Plan pilots have been well supported by the project and continue to run successfully in their respective establishments. The introduction of the Family Learning programme SHARE at HMP Hewell has also been supported and driven forward by the project with sound plans in place for its continued delivery across all three sites of the cluster.

Whilst the courses delivered may vary, the role of the course tutor is fundamental in delivering meaningful family focused educational opportunities. The project's meetings with tutors leading the parenting/family courses in HMPS found a group of tutors from a variety of operational backgrounds and with a wide range of experience but consistently dedicated to this work. However, there was less consistency in the levels of support available to these practitioners with little opportunity for professional development or any meaningful peer support structure. The majority of tutors operate in isolation with no clear links to other prison based or community parenting practitioners. In order to address some of these issues, the project sought to create a professional development programme for parenting practitioners working with offenders and their families. The project considered a number of nationally recognised qualifications for practitioners working with parents and identified that a pilot was underway of a new City and Guilds qualification, 'Working with Parents', which had been written to meet the National Occupational Standards for parenting practitioners.

In partnership with Parenting UK, a lead agency for the development of the new standards, the project developed a tailored training course from the core programme for Working With Parents. Thirteen candidates from custodial settings were recruited to the course with twelve completing. The students were representative of the broad range of people delivering parenting courses in prisons – education, chaplaincy, CARAT teams, prison officers, local voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector.



*Practitioners from HMP Hewell receiving their WWP Awards from Governor Jeanette Hall.*



The training, the personal portfolios and the detailed evaluation undertaken by the project has informed the feedback that FDM has been able to provide to City & Guilds and Parenting UK to inform the process of the designing the final course content. We have been able to raise specific issues relating to learning outcomes, training material and operational difficulties relevant to parenting practitioners working in prisons.

The National Academy of Parenting Practitioners has now rolled out its generic training programme for practitioners. This training, although intended ultimately as the generic programme for all of those working with parents, is currently only accessible via the Parenting Commissioner of each local authority. The National Academy for Parenting Practitioners has, however, recognised the need to extend this availability with their recommendation for *'upskilling the workforce and greater professional development for people delivering parenting programmes in prison... the Parenting Academy should engage and support education contractors.'*

## Recommendations



### The project recommends...

- Clarity of purpose at a national strategic level must be achieved for the delivery of parenting and relationship interventions, including agreed funding and delivery models.
- Only accredited and approved programmes should be run with a clear purpose identified for the use of each course at each location.
- Inconsistency in approach between regions towards the control and accreditation of courses by area psychology teams should be addressed.
- Prisoners' and their families' needs must be at the core of any recruitment process and information from OASys and sentence reports should be consulted as well as an in depth interview process undertaken.
- Staff delivering parenting/family education programmes should be well supported and have access to training which meets the NOS for WWP.
- Family Learning should be available to prisoners and their families as a way of engaging with their children on Family or Domestic Visits.
- Programmes should include more partner/family involvement so that mixed messages are avoided and any future planning undertaken is realistic and meets the need of the whole family.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## Overview

Partnerships between offender management agencies and community organisations are fundamental to the provision of services aimed at rehabilitating offenders and reducing their likelihood to reoffend. From libraries within prison establishments to drugs programmes for offenders under the supervision of probation services, voluntary, charity and statutory providers are engaged in a wide range of partnerships that together seek to contribute to the NOMS agenda of 'end to end offender management'. The development of the Children and Families pathway similarly requires opportunities for such partnerships to be exploited, particularly between NOMS and the primary provider of children and family services within the community, the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The *MOJ and DCSF Joint Review of 2007* was a welcome collaboration and recognised that the negative impacts of offending behaviour on families could be substantial, with children especially vulnerable. It also highlighted that this is an 'invisible' group with local authorities having no clear picture of their potential demand for services.

The work of the Families Do Matter Project has turned increasingly to addressing this issue and has achieved some important breakthroughs in its attempts to forge a coherent strategy for joint working between NOMS and DCSF agencies. Early work to increase awareness amongst family practitioners of the needs of offenders' families has developed into a training event called 'Hidden Sentence' and from there to a 'train the trainer' package to facilitate cascade training to wider audiences. Partnerships have flowed from engagement with local authority staff which have allowed the formation of further partnerships with probation offices and prisons. Through these early pilots the project is testing how the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) can be used as a tool to coordinate service delivery for families of offenders, with offender management staff utilising their unique access to the client group to act as 'signposters' of services.

*"The CAF is a standardised approach to conducting an assessment of a child's additional needs and deciding how those needs should be met. The CAF will promote more effective, earlier identification of additional needs, particularly in universal services. It is intended to provide a simple process for a holistic assessment of a child's needs and strengths, taking account of the role of parents, carers and environmental factors on their development. The CAF will also help to improve integrated working by promoting coordinated service provision."*

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/delivering-services/caf/>





Whilst the project has been raising awareness amongst community based family practitioners of the needs of offenders' families it has also been working to improve prison and probation staff's awareness of the availability of these services and how they can contribute to helping offenders and their families access them where appropriate. This simple concept, of creating a strategic and consistent relationship between these two key agencies, can provide a structure for the coordination of family centric services aimed at both improving outcomes for offenders' families and reducing reoffending.

The project's early work in developing these partnerships at local and regional level are outlined in more detail later, including some exploratory work targeting services and information at a group of local prisoners. Also included is the detail of how a partnership between a West Midlands prison and local statutory service organisations has demonstrated the potential of these partnerships to support the activities that a prison might seek to deliver within its own Children and Families Pathway plans.

The project's work in this area has led to the creation of a proposal for a framework for a partnership between MOJ, through NOMS, and DCSF through its local authority services, including children and family practitioners, schools, family information services and other 'nurture' locations such as children centres.



## Raising Awareness (the ‘Hidden Sentence’)

The project created partnerships with two local authorities, Telford & Wrekin Borough Council and Coventry City Council in 2007, through which it hoped to explore the opportunities to improve engagement between offender management agencies and others working with families in the community. A project officer was seconded from each authority. Early work confirmed that there was little awareness of the needs of offenders’ families at either a delivery or strategic level. From communications with a wide variety of community service providers it was evident that although practitioners were sometimes aware that they were working with families who had a relative or partner in prison, they had no concept of the impact this had on children or other family members. In Coventry it was identified that the electronic directory of services, used to identify what help was available to families, produced no suggestions when searched using any imprisonment related terms.

*“Everyone working with children and young people should be aware of the barriers which prevent children of prisoners attaining good outcomes as set out in Every Child Matters.”*

*Working with Children and Families of Prisoners, Orminston Trust 2007.*

The newly introduced Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process in Telford was well established at this time but this lack of knowledge and understanding resulted in there being no recognition that the imprisonment of a family member might be a potential trigger for an assessment of a family’s need. Nor was there a realisation amongst practitioners working with families of the potential range of impacts that imprisonment of a family member might entail.

In an attempt to address this, a multi-agency training package “Hidden Sentence” was developed by the project, in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children Board in Telford. Pre-existing training resources from Action for Prisoners’ Families (APF) and Barnardos Northern Ireland were utilised in a package aimed at improving the knowledge base of those delivering children and family services in a community setting.

The programme seeks to;

- consider the vulnerability factors for families with a family member in prison.
- consider the impact of imprisonment for all family members.
- raise awareness of the issues particular to a child living in a family with a member in prison.
- identify and understand the barriers that children and young people face in achieving the five ECM outcomes.
- raise awareness of how the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) can be used to support the needs of these families.



## Hidden Sentence Training

The 'Hidden Sentence' course has been delivered to over 200 practitioners in the pilot locations and has been universally well received. For practitioners to attend the training there was a prerequisite that they had completed a child protection basic awareness course and also CAF training.

The course highlights to practitioners the resources available to them to support these children, including age appropriate books, CDs and DVDs, none of which at present feature heavily, if at all, in the community environment. Where possible an outside speaker has attended to deliver a session on a "day in the life of a prisoner".

The original 'Hidden Sentence' training was run for 2½ hours and then extended to a full day event. Training that has run in Walsall and Warwickshire has followed this format but other areas are trialling other time spans.

The course continues to evolve and can be adapted to meet local needs and policy. The course has also been used as a basis for workshops at conferences such as the 'Early Years – Inclusion Conference' aimed at nursery providers.

The project has also produced awareness raising materials for community practitioners, highlighting how the Every Child Matters agenda applies to this high need audience.

Consultants from Glyndwr University, Wales, devised and analysed an online questionnaire for individuals who had attended FDM training. The response to a question comparing the participants' knowledge regarding the impact on a child of a parent or carer being sent to prison before and after the training, indicated a large post course improvement.

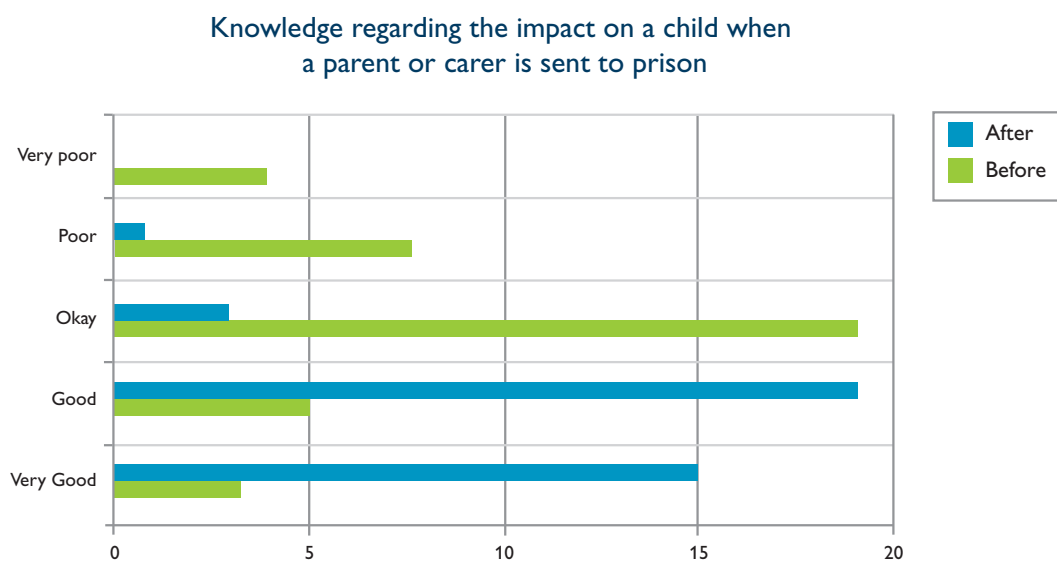


Figure 10

A similar improvement was shown regarding the impact of imprisonment on the family as a whole.

### Knowledge and understanding of the impact of prison on the family

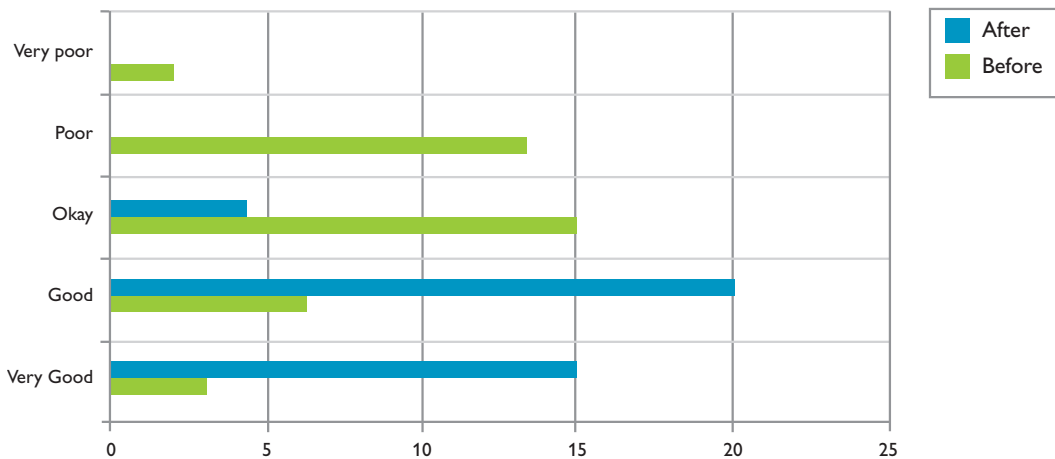


Figure 11

The evaluation of the training has been extremely positive from all agencies, both adult and children’s services. All delegates indicated that the objectives of the course had been achieved and that the increase in their knowledge base would enable them to better identify the needs of these families and offer a more supportive service.

Comments from the delegates illustrate some of the impacts and relevance of this awareness raising activity:



*“Have worked with many children who have a parent in prison - but did not realise the full impact upon the children and partner.”*

*“I am now more aware of the impact a member of the family being in prison system can have on the family and the knock-on effect on members of the prisoner’s family.”*

*“It has enhanced my empathy towards the families and has given me a greater understanding of the barriers that they have to overcome.”*

*“I now realise how life with a family member in prison can have a detrimental effect on all of the family in many different ways.”*

*“I am trying to arrange the training for all my colleagues.”*



Several participants revealed that their own perceptions of families of offenders had been changed substantially with comments such as:



*“At the training I was able to ascertain that I had a negative 'attitude' towards families with a parent in prison.”*

Several participants identified a need for more concrete action and focused strategy in light of the training:



*“The need for prisons to be involved with CAF.”*

*“Use the CAF process for early identification and ensure support is available at the earliest opportunity.”*

*“The need for a national strategy to meet CAF needs for families separated through imprisonment.”*

*“Links with partner organisations & other initiatives need to be strengthened and made more visible.”*

*“I will be looking at how I can raise awareness in the CAF training.”*

## Train the Trainer

Early meetings with CAF coordinators from across the region indicated that there was a high level of interest in engaging with this training programme and adopting a strategic approach to targeting services at this 'invisible group' of families. As in the pilot areas of Coventry and Telford & Wrekin no authority was providing training to support practitioners in the awareness of the needs of this group or of support that was available to them.

The project was keen to expand both its audience but also mainstream delivery. To achieve this the project staff created a 'Train the Trainer' model of its 'Hidden Sentence' training, to allow a cascade approach from a core group of participants. Training was offered to all authorities predominately through the CAF coordinators but also via workforce development teams. There were no educational prerequisites to attending this training but it was required that delegates had the commitment to run the training within their authority and the backing of their manager to support this.

The training course runs for a full day, enabling delegates to experience some of the 'Hidden Sentence' training itself but also to have time to consider the problems, practicalities and prejudices which they might meet in running this course. Participants are provided with samples of all the support materials for running the training as well as the relevant DVDs, powerpoint presentation and trainer guide. The guide contains tips for running the course, trainer notes for each powerpoint slide, activity aides, an evaluation form and useful statistics and contact information.

Delegates on the Train the Trainer course are offered the opportunity to visit a prison to give them a chance to share the experience of a family member visiting the establishment. Some have found this daunting but illuminating and very useful when they come to deliver the part of the 'Hidden Sentence' training which deals with a child visiting prison.

The project team have now run four courses in venues across the West Midlands and have reached 11 of the 14 authorities. Further expressions of interest in future training continue to be received. By April 2009, the resultant cascade training of Hidden Sentence has been delivered in Stoke on Trent, Walsall and Warwickshire with existing plans for delivery in a number of other locations.

All training within the project's pilot authorities has been undertaken using a multi-agency model. The running of courses in these other authorities has given the opportunity to test the course for a single agency audience. Whilst the aims of the course have been achieved using this single agency approach trainers, both from the project and the authority involved, felt that the opportunity and benefits from discussion and shared learning generated by the multi-agency approach was lost.

Members of the project team have attended the locations where the training has already been held in order not only to support colleagues in delivering the training but to also quality assure the standard of the training being delivered. Members of the project team continue to support colleagues in other authorities to gain agreement and commitment from appropriate departments, workforce development teams and Local Safeguarding Children Boards regarding which department will hold responsibility for the delivery of this training.



### The project recommends...

That 'Hidden Sentence' training and awareness raising activity should be adopted by local authority workforce development teams utilising the project's Train the Trainer package and materials.



## Building Partnerships

The success of the project's awareness raising amongst community based family service providers has led to the development, by the Families Do Matter project, of a model for a partnership between National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) delivery units. This has been promoted at local and regional level, using the 'on the ground' links with CAF coordinators but also promoting this approach to Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) and, through GOWM, to Local Authority Directors of Children's Services.

The project has also worked with probation chiefs and prison management to identify some potential pilot locations for partnership arrangements with local authorities and a number of these have been initiated. Having raised awareness and interest levels amongst statutory family service providers, the challenge has been to make meaningful links to the offender management services that are able to facilitate improved access to offenders' families.

*"It's about joined up working... particularly agencies that may not have a history of working together like prisons and children's services to ensure that the family gets the support it needs when a parent goes to prison\*."*

Hilary Armstrong, Minister for Social Exclusion, Families At Risk Review Launch.

## Working with the National Probation Service

Whilst Probation Officers (PO) and Probations Support Officers (PSO) work closely with offenders under their supervision there is very little focus on, or awareness of, the potential family specific services that might help them and their families, and potentially contribute to better outcomes. In order to explore the opportunities to develop this field, the project has agreed two areas of joint work with the National Probation Service in the West Midlands; to design and deliver professional development materials to support the training of probation staff and to create pilot partnerships between local probation offices and their local authority family services counterparts which aim to better target services to this client group.

\* Cabinet Office, 2007, p.1

## Professional Development

The Midlands Regional Probation Training Consortium (MRPTC) coordinates the recruitment and induction training of all POs and PSOs in the Midlands region and delivers continuing professional development to existing staff. In partnership with MTC the project has designed a probation staff training module to support the development of Children and Family Pathway awareness and the availability, and methods of accessing, locally available family support services. Test events have been run in both East and West Midlands to allow an evaluation of their effectiveness.

The one day training course covers:

- The impact of Imprisonment on families.
- How offenders can access support for their children and families.
- How a Common Assessment may help and what may happen next.
- Resettlement and Probation responsibilities and processes.

The course was initially targeted at PSOs only, to enable courses to be delivered and evaluated during the project's timescales, but some POs also attended. The training was delivered jointly by a trainer from the Probation Training Consortium and an FDM team member. A staff member from Action for Prisoners Families also attended one of the sessions to give additional support. Feedback from the course was overwhelmingly positive with 80% of participants on the latest course stating that the course had been 'very successful' in identifying the need for probation staff to consider the issues for families of prisoners and in identifying the vulnerability factors for families with a member in prison. Participants felt strongly that this course was relevant to their roles and it had a practical role to play in their work.



*“Excellent materials given, that we can actually use!!!”*

*“I feel more empowered to offer good advice which will actually support the offender and especially the family.”*

*“Clear guidance about the use of CAF which will be vital to all probation staff.”*

The MRPTC has now incorporated this training into its Trainee Probation Officer qualifying training programme and its wider Probation Service Officer programme in the Midlands as a Specialist Module. They have committed to work with NOMS and other national consortia colleagues to include it in the new Qualifying Framework anticipated for 2010.





## Testimonial

There is a significant professional interest within the Probation Service in the family relationship dimensions of our work with prisoners, both before, during and after custodial sentences. The ethos of this work also has a clear relevance to offenders under our supervision in the community. The response of our practitioner staff to the Families Do Matter initiative has therefore been strong and will be enduring. We plan to share this work with our colleagues in all Probation Regional Consortia across England and to influence its inclusion in the new national Qualifying Framework for Practitioners currently under development, with scheduled implementation in April 2010. The module will be available for experienced staff as an element of their continued professional development .

Our analysis of our work with offenders who are in custody and who are in the community is characterised by the significance of their families to their past, present and potential offending. There is commonly an intergenerational aspect to offending and clearly Crime Prevention and Reducing Reoffending strategies must reflect that perspective. What this 'Families Do Matter' programme does is to provide our practitioner staff with an enhanced understanding of these issues and, critically, detailed and focused understanding and information for our staff working with offenders and their families.

**Ian Macnair**

*Director Midlands Regional Probation Training Consortium*

### Probation Pilot Areas

The project has agreed with all four West Midlands region probation areas to deliver pilots at specific area offices to test delivery methods for a focus on the Children and Family Pathway and wider agenda. In total, by April 2009, five probation offices partnerships have been created, in which awareness and process training is delivered by local authority CAF coordinators and referral protocols to family services agreed. The objective is that probation staff will be equipped to identify and refer relevant offenders and their families to their partner service. The pilots will use the Common Assessment Framework for the screening of offenders' families' needs. Training at each area office is currently underway and the project has produced materials to promote these partnerships for use in probation offices.

The Probation Service is a key agency, having regular access to those completing or serving their sentences in the community. The new training module will mean that the previously overlooked needs of families of offenders are now routinely part of the probation officer's knowledge base. The pilots being developed will test how that knowledge can be utilised, and what support processes are required, to maximise the potential for probation staff to support offenders in the process of accessing the services within their communities that can improve the outcomes that they and their families experience and by doing so, contribute to reductions in reoffending rates.

## Working with Prisons

As with probation offices, the project has been creating partnerships between family services and prisons, commencing with four pilot locations. By March 2009 training has been delivered at three sites, with nominated staff and prisoners' peer supporters learning about the CAF process, how it works, the agencies likely to be involved and its benefits both for the family and the prisoner. Previous experience of engagement with statutory agencies for most prisoners will have been contact with Social Services either in connection with their own childhood needs or those of their children. There is a need to re-educate offenders, focusing on how modern children and family services are structured to support families, now 'needs led' rather than following the previous 'concern led' model. At the same time, prison staff have little knowledge of how to contact a local authority about a prisoner's child or family, or what might be available should they do so. Attempts to contact unknown individuals can be frustrating and discourage further efforts.

The prison partnerships create challenges around the 'locality' of the service providers. Local authorities represent the interests of those living within its boundaries and until now that has largely excluded those housed in prisons. Ultimately, the services being offered via CAF are family based so require the cooperation of the authority services in the home location. With potentially wide dispersal of prisoners this presents a logistical challenge. This issue has seemingly contributed to the creation of offenders' families as an 'invisible group', with local authority structures inhibiting a coordinated approach.

The project has sought to address this, highlighting to family services policy makers and management that prisons represent large concentrations of potentially high need for their services, and that accessing this audience at its source is substantially more efficient than relying on traditional methods. In its initial pilot approach FDM is urging the nomination of local contacts within family services structures who will champion the work with their local prison. Early agreement has been reached at two sites. Nominated contacts will allow referrals coming from the prisons to be filtered through one point before decisions are made about how to access services 'out of area' where appropriate.

The project has been able to secure CAF trainer resources from authorities local to the prison's location and training has been delivered with project staff in attendance, usually half day sessions attended by prison staff from chaplaincy, education and resettlement as well as volunteers from the visitor centre and enhanced prisoners such as Listeners and Insiders. The sessions identify the impact of imprisonment on the members of the family and go on to look at how the CAF can be used to meet the needs that arise. The areas which CAF will address are examined and case studies are used to illustrate the benefits.



Promotional poster



In the three prisons response to the training has been mixed. One of the establishments has taken the process no further than an initial training session which was poorly attended and at which some of the attendees were openly sceptical about the need for and benefits of engaging with the prisoners. At the other two establishments the response has been much more positive. One establishment is developing the use of the CAF pre-assessment questionnaire as part of their induction process and has requested further training sessions. The links established with the local authorities have led to members of prison staff spending time with colleagues from children's services to gain knowledge of what support is available to families. At one establishment "listeners" have already signposted three families into the CAF process. A process to assist the signposting of information with appropriate local authorities has been agreed between one establishment and their local CAF team. A member of this CAF team is developing an awareness raising programme for parents and it has been agreed that she will work with education staff within the establishment to deliver this to the prisoners.

Where the training was evaluated using HMPS Training Evaluation System they indicated that a significant number of the delegates had been highly satisfied with the training.

*"I feel that I already deal with prisoners' issues & concerns but it is interesting to learn about the CAF process and I would use it."*

Resettlement officer at FDM training event.



Case Study – Christine

**Case Study**

Mother, Christine\*, due to appear in court in four days time and is expecting a prison sentence. Christine has a son, Richie, aged 11 years and three daughters, Mel (aged 10), Lowri (aged 12) and Jo (aged 19). Lowri lives with her natural father. Christine has a partner, Leslie.

**How identified**

Christine realised that she needed help and contacted the Family Service who referred her to SHARP (Support, Help and Advice for Relatives and friends of Prisoners) who then advised contact with the Families Do Matter Project Officer.

**Scenario**

Christine was due to appear in court expecting to be sent to prison. The children and other family members were unaware of the situation. Christine had arranged for her son Richie to live with her friend (Davina) but had not informed the private fostering team of these arrangements. Mel is to be looked after by partner Leslie, who will be supported by Christine’s eldest daughter Jo, aged 19, who has recently given birth to her second child.

**Action taken**

A CAF was initiated and agreement received from Christine to share the information with all necessary agencies. The private fostering team met with Christine, her son Richie, Davina and Leslie to complete appropriate forms and checks. Head teachers at Mel and Richie’s schools were informed. The secondary school arranged to meet with Richie on the first day of term and put in place support mechanisms. Knowledge of Christine’s imprisonment was limited to Mel’s primary class teacher, head and class TA who offered support as necessary. A Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting was held to look at whether Richie’s needs were being met. Richie wanted to take music lessons and CAF Budget Holding Lead Professional (BHLP) money was made available for this. Special arrangements were agreed for Jo to park within the school grounds to pick Mel up from school in order to meet her own children’s childcare needs.

**Outcome**

Both children continue to be supported and monitored within the school settings and this appears to be successful. Both children continue to have contact with their mother through visits and phone calls. This case study illustrates how CAF can provide a structured programme of support across agencies. Without the input of the project worker this outcome would not have been easily achieved, even though Christine was actively seeking help. Awareness raising of the needs of offenders’ families and systems for routine screening for potential CAF referral would make these types of coordinated outcomes more easily accessible.

\* Fictitious names have been used.



## Case Study – Hindpal

### Case Study

Hindpal\*, a prisoner and Anisha\*, his wife. Three children under 6 years old.

### How identified

The Health Visitor identified Anisha as depressed and completed a CAF assessment.

### Scenario

Issues identified in the CAF assessment were:

- Maternal isolation and depression
- Children not attending nursery school or arriving late
- Financial problems because Hindpal had previously supported his extended family financially and they were expecting Anisha to carry this on despite receiving only basic benefits. She was also trying to support Hindpal with money whilst he was in prison.
- Behavioural issues with the children.

The CAF identified needs and the Children Centre Outreach Services, health visitor, nursery manager, school teacher, SHARP worker (Support, Help and Advice for Relatives and friends of Prisoners) and Anisha were asked to attend a Team Around the Child meeting.

### Action taken

The Children Centre Family Support Worker offered to support Anisha to help get the children to school and nursery on time. Free nursery provision was offered to the youngest child. The Health Visitor offered listening visits to Anisha. The Family Support worker helped Anisha with setting boundaries and rewards for the children. SHARP supported Anisha to attend a peer support group. The school teacher offered 1-2-1 time for the older child as necessary.

### Outcome

Anisha took up voluntary work with SHARP and has progressed to full time employment. Her improved self-worth enabled her to discuss the unreasonable expectations of Hindpal's family for which he then made alternative arrangements. This case study illustrates some of the complexities that can arise when a partner is imprisoned. In this instance, CAF led to a range of assistance which stabilised the family unit and supported the mother to cope with the immediate and longer term challenges. Finding opportunities within the offender management agencies to identify family needs would mean that these types of coordinated solutions were more readily identified and accessed.

\* Fictitious names have been used.

## Coventry City Council and the Mothers' Union at HMP Hewell

Early development of the models for partnership included the setting up of an exploratory model in order to test possible approaches to developing links between prisons and local authorities. The Mothers' Union has been working at HMP Hewell for a number of years and the prison, formerly called HMP Blakenhurst, was the local prison for the Coventry area, serving the city's courts. Coventry City Council had no previous relationship with the prison. The work had several aims:

- Identify a cohort of prisoners from the Coventry area, identify their needs and relevant support services.
- Provide support to prisoners in their role as family members.
- Explore the potential of developing working relationships between prison based staff and community services.
- Develop the knowledge of prison based staff in relation to accessing family services in the community.
- Develop the knowledge of community based staff in relation to the prison regime and the needs of prisoners families.

The Mothers' Union identified every prisoner from Coventry who was sent to HMP Hewell. An initial assessment interview with a Family Support Worker was offered to every prisoner. Of the 660 Coventry based prisoners during the period, nearly half were transferred to other prisons before interviews could take place but over 370 prisoners were interviewed. During the interview details of the family structure and significant relationships were recorded and the prisoner was given the opportunity to discuss any family issues he had. The Family Workers would then offer support to the prisoner and, where appropriate, his family.

Coventry City Council provided a contact person and a range of information on family support services to the Mothers' Union. The FDM community officer also expanded the range of online information for offenders' families on the City Council's own website.

Issues identified were wide ranging, including; a prisoner who revealed his partner and very young children had to leave their family home due to intimidation and were now homeless, partners suffering with alcohol and drug problems, debt and housing issues. There were a number of fathers who identified that their children had started to exhibit behavioural issues. Evidence of awareness and engagement with community services was low. A significant proportion of prisoners highlighted social care involvement.

The Family Support workers offered a range of support including referrals to prison based interventions, eg. story book dads and external support for the family, eg. local housing support services. Many interviews had to be conducted during the prisoner's normal work activity but despite a lack of ideal conditions sometimes, the range of the issues raised by prisoners and the initial support they were offered demonstrated a clear appetite for an initial screening process when someone first enters prison.

One of the restrictions on the level of support that could be offered to prisoners and their families was the high turnover of prisoners at HMP Hewell. However, the FDM project was also able to demonstrate that referral between prison staff is possible when a prisoner is transferred, so that ongoing support to a family can continue.



## Case Study – Stuart

### Case Study

Stuart is a prolific offender, who has recently returned to prison on licence recall and is awaiting sentence for another offence. His partner, Sarah, is the mother of Mickey, Stuart's 9 year old son.

### How identified

The CAF was initiated by a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO).

### Scenario

Mickey was exhibiting very challenging behaviour, being verbally and physically abusive to his mother, nan and his brother. He was on a part-time timetable at school and seemed unable to cope being in school any longer, where he had been climbing on the school roof, smoking over 15 cigarettes a day and starting fires, and had been issued with an Acceptable Behaviour Contract. Mickey is presented as a very angry and confused little boy with extreme mood swings.

Due to the cost of visiting Stuart in prison, the family had only been able to visit sporadically. This had a dramatic effect upon Mickey's behaviour, as he wanted to see his dad. He had repeatedly told people that he wanted to go to prison to be with his dad.

### Action taken

Initial support was agreed at the first CAF meeting to increase support to Mickey and his family. This included Educational Psychological counselling for Mickey and his mother and ongoing support by the PCSO and a local voluntary sector organisation. The family and practitioners felt strongly that involving Stuart was vital to the family.

Through the CAF process, contact was made with FDM's project at HMP Hewell. The Family Support Worker met with Stuart and Sarah to offer additional support at the prison. Sarah was given information on Community Transport and the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVS) to alleviate the financial and practical issues surrounding visiting. The Family Support Worker also attend a CAF meeting and was able to give additional information on the prison regime and support that the prison may be able to offer the family. Stuart had a very traumatic childhood and had asked for help in dealing with this and the drink and drugs he had used to block out the memories. Stuart was able to access the In Reach team and would be able to apply for Drug and Alcohol based courses.

When Stuart was sentenced he was due to be moved out of the region, which would potentially have exacerbated the problems being experienced by the family. The practitioners involved in the CAF, including Stuart's Probation Officer, worked together to ensure that Stuart was allocated to a prison in the region that the family would be able to access. Additional behavioural programmes were also put in place to support Stuart to deal with the abuse, alcohol and drug issues he had raised.

### Outcome

In this instance both family services and offender management services were able to coordinate support through the use of CAF. Services within the prison and family services outside are tackling the range of issues that have impacted upon this family. The assistance provided at HMP Hewell by a project funded worker, and also coincidentally by the Family Services Coordinator at HMP Featherstone to which Stuart was transferred, illustrates how a network of family services workers in prisons could provide specialist support to assist community based family services with targeting 'whole family' solutions that meet the Think Family agenda.

\* Fictitious names have been used.

As the wide range and complexity of family issues being captured by the work at HMP Hewell makes clear, there is a real need for prison based staff to have good levels of awareness of the range of family support services available and how to access them and this need informed the development of the awareness raising model covered earlier. In this instance Coventry City Council agreed to offer additional support to the prison through a series of CAF and Family Awareness sessions.

The consistent difficulties of prisoner movement were highlighted by this partnership work with significant numbers of Coventry based prisoners being routinely transferred to the North of England.

Coventry to	HMP Hewell, Redditch	HMP Altcourse, Liverpool
<b>Distance</b>	65 miles	236 miles
<b>Cost by car</b>	£6.50	£28.48
<b>Travel Time by car (round trip)</b>	2 hours 12 mins*	4 hours 12 mins*
<b>Cost by train</b>	£15.00	£66.10
<b>Travel Time by train and bus (round trip)</b>	2 hours 44 mins including 2 changes*	6 hours including 4 changes*

Figure 12 \* Typical family impacts for visiting after transfer from HMP Hewell (times do not include travel to mainline stations and times spent at prison).

As a result of the number of families who continued to contact the Mothers’ Union for support immediately after their family member had been transferred, new materials to support families were developed. The most common query from families related to their concerns about travelling to the new prison. The Family Support workers designed and piloted a series of information cards giving basic details about other prisons’ locations, visiting hours and travel details. Due to the popularity of the information cards they have now developed a range which covers all the prisons that HMP Hewell regularly transfers to.



**The project recommends...**

- That through the raised awareness within statutory services, partnerships should be formed between children and family services directorates and their authority located prisons and probation offices. These partnerships should seek to increase referrals to family services and improve outcomes experienced by offenders families, utilising the CAF process where appropriate.
- Awareness raising training of the availability of family services, and how to access them, should be delivered to offender management staff and processes agreed and implemented for the identification and referral of potential clients to family service providers.
- Probation training consortia should adopt the training model developed by the project with the Midlands Consortium for inclusion in induction and professional development of staff. A similar approach should be adopted within HMPS.





## Schools policy

Many school staff become aware that a child has family members in prison. On occasion this is volunteered by the carer of the child, and sometimes for the purpose of seeking support from the school. However, all too often this is not the case, with staff either having no knowledge or only that which is assumed or comes to them unofficially. In those circumstances, offering help is extremely difficult and often impossible.

There are many reasons why the carer or parent chooses not to disclose to the school. Many fear the stigma that they or the child may suffer and many have a fundamental mistrust of institutions, including schools in which their own earlier experiences may not have been positive.

*A teacher had become aware that three children in her infant class had a parent in prison. She had been told by neighbours of the family and thus felt unable to speak to either the child or the remaining parent – acknowledging their wish not to share information. She reported that the children were all struggling to cope and the need for CAF was discussed with her.*

Information from a conference in 2008.

Children with particular educational needs and requiring additional support are often a focus for educational bodies but the needs of offenders' children, and most notably those with a absent parents through imprisonment, are largely unaddressed. This, again, flows from the difficulty of this group being 'invisible' with no structure for authority based 'notification' of imprisonment, but is also due to the lack of a coherent strategy for targeting such families' needs. Lack of resources relating to children visiting prison within schools and staff's lack of knowledge about the impact of imprisonment on the family are a feature of this problem. Posters directing families to where to seek advice and support in relation to other issues such as drug, alcohol and domestic violence are clearly displayed. No such information is available in relation to imprisonment.

Schools provide named personnel to support children in care, those with special educational needs and those whose names are on the child protection register. There is no nominated person to support the children of prisoners.



The Families Do Matter Project has been promoting the development of a 'Parent in Prison' policy for adoption within schools. The model proposed is a simple one:

- Hidden Sentence Training (adapted to schools) for key nominated staff.
- Resource pack of reference materials to inform staff of opportunities to support children and families.
- Approved materials in school libraries.
- Posters and leaflets to promote availability of support and encourage disclosure.

Publicity, within school prospectives, newsletters and promotional materials, of the availability of a named person to support children of prisoners would highlight to families the school's awareness of the needs of those children and give permission to families to seek that support.

The project has been promoting this approach in one of the authorities within the region and a draft policy is currently under consideration. At the same time, an authority which received 'Family Pathfinder' funding, as a result of the *Think Family – Families at Risk Review*, has expressed an interest in piloting the approach and developing the necessary materials. The project hopes to support this work in 2009/10.



### The project recommends...

That a 'Parent in Prison' policy should be adopted by local authorities, to include training of key staff, the provision of staff resource packs and publicity materials to encourage families and carers to seek support.





## Outreach

A wide range of organisations work in our prisons in support of the children and families of prisoners. Typically from the third sector, they vary in size with some working with single establishments whilst others have developed a more regional presence. Similar variations exist with funding, some with independent external funding whilst others are directly supported by the prisons with which they are working. What varies most, however, is the range of services which they provide with wide variations between individual prisons and regions.

Notably lacking from this structure is the consistent involvement of statutory family services. Progress in this area has been reliant upon individual initiatives and attempts at engagement rather than a clear strategy for a coordination between prisons and the children and family service providers in their local area or on a regional or national level. There is no routine policy of engagement or understanding between NOMS and DCSF to encourage individual local authorities to work with prisons. Whilst large Children and Family Directorates operate in every local authority they do not typically have a formal relationship with local prisons, despite those prisons routinely housing several hundreds of prisoners, many with children and family whose needs for services are likely to be amongst the highest. The issue of locality (with prisons invariably housing offenders whose family base is outside of the local area) is seen as an inhibitor which discourages individual authorities from viewing prisons as what they are – a location of high volume need.

The project's work with awareness raising training has created a number of links within the West Midlands and a proposed model for how agencies can work together to help offenders' families access services intended to improve the outcomes they experience. These partnerships, between local authorities and prisons and probation offices to deliver training and ongoing referral relationships, are potentially capable of expansion to other areas of the services offered at prison locations. The project is proposing the development of an 'outreach' approach, in which statutory services extend their engagement with prison establishments in their area, creating a network of support which is lacking from the current approach.

The Families Do Matter Project believes that local authorities should develop a partnership with all prisons within their geographic location and agree a strategic plan for delivery of services to those establishments.

It is recognised that opportunities vary between locations, whether due to resource implications or merely the physical environment. Not all prisons have visitor centres, but most do and all new HMPS developments have them as standard. As a minimum, there should be an information partnership which sees statutory services routinely working with visitor centres to ensure that relevant local and national services are appropriately promoted. Ensuring that prisoners can access appropriate family services information, and that visiting families can do likewise, should be a routine focus of those responsible for delivering statutory services.

## Statutory Services at HMP Featherstone

The project has developed an ‘illustrator’ of this approach by forming a partnership between HMP Featherstone and local, Wolverhampton based agencies – the Wolverhampton Family Information Service (WFIS) and the Berries Children Centre (attached to Berrybrook School). Through this partnership, enhanced family day visits have been delivered and continue to evolve, now including family learning and play support from other statutory funded teams. Additionally, information services have been developed utilising the prison’s visitor centre as a key location for delivery. Most notably, perhaps, the Family Information Service (FIS), has provided a worker to be based within the prison to be a ‘Family Services Coordinator’, both fulfilling the role of the FIS in an ‘outreach’ model and also helping to develop the delivery of the wider Children and Family Pathway agenda within the prison.

WFIS and Berries now support the delivery of Family Days every quarter at HMP Featherstone. Their involvement has allowed the establishment to develop its original delivery and the events now include a range of family play and learning opportunities that were not previously available. Qualified play workers are on site, easing the previous burden on education team staff. WFIS continues to manage delivery in consultation with prison management, and has recently brought in the local authority’s ‘Play Team’ who are now delivering enhanced family play routines which have been extremely well received, alongside the other new play and craft activities. The objective of the days is ‘to involve children and parents in constructive family activities and by doing so to build confidence and relationships’. At the same time, the FIS is able to deliver its family information services in a supportive environment, and has now expanded to provide that aspect of its role at the pre-existing family days at the neighbouring HMYOI Brinsford.



### Quotes from HMP Featherstone Family Days - Children

*“I feel ever so happy when I come and see dad on these special visits.” (6yrs)*

*“Today was great and fantastic and I would like to thank everybody who helped to arrange this special day.” (7 yrs)*

*“Thank you for letting me see my daddy.” (6 yrs)*

*“I feel lucky, happy and excited when I see my dad.” (8 yrs)*

*“We love playing with daddy on these visits.” (5 yrs)*

*“I liked painting with my dad today.” (4 yrs)*

*“I made my dad a picture frame to keep in his room that was cool.” (10 yrs)*

*“My daddy painted my face like a tiger.” (6 yrs)*





### Quotes from HMP Featherstone Family Days - Adults

*“The staff were great; we would like to thank you for a great family day.”*

*“The visits are excellent! Where children and dads can have sentimental time together. Thanks.”*

*“It has been a lovely day, any family would benefit from these visits. Thank you.”*

*“It has been very well organised with very helpful and friendly staff.”*



Early success of the WFIS involvement with HMP Featherstone's Enhanced Family Days led to the project exploring other methods of delivering 'Outreach' services at the prison. At the project's suggestion WFIS agreed to locate one of its team within the prison to support the delivery of children and family services, both those involving WFIS and those which the prison delivers itself. Initially FDM provided some funding for the post but it will continue into 2010 without additional support. This Family Services Coordinator's (FSC) key role is to deliver the WFIS service within the prison itself, accessing families who visit, either at enhanced family days or regular domestic visits, but increasingly seeking to explore ways to communicate directly with the prison population. With large numbers of prisoners routinely not receiving visits, it is recognised that it is important to not simply target families which already visit. A key part of the role is therefore to be highly visible to prisoners, so that they know that there is someone that they can approach for advice and support in relation to family issues; liaise with prisoners and family members/outside agencies and provide information and support about outside services available to prisoners' families. The role is intended to prevent children and families slipping through the net of service provision, ensuring that there is some responsible agency with regard to the well-being of prisoners, their partners and children.

The FSC role helps with the delivery of the family days, benefiting from being on site to deal with the recruitment and planning. The role, however, also extends to more everyday engagement with prisoners' families, regularly attending the visitor centre to meet with visiting families.

The FSC attends the visitor centre to offer support and advice to friends and families of prisoners. The site is currently awaiting the installation of two electronic information kiosks, again supplied by WFIS, so that the visitors can search for support in their own local area, not just in Wolverhampton. For the children the kiosks will feature games and activities to prepare and familiarise them with the visiting experience. The FSC has arranged for a representative from Pertemps (a recruitment agency) to give support at the visitors centre once a week. Pertemps work alongside Job Centre Plus and promote New Deal initiatives for lone parents, and have successfully signed up a number of prison visitors for Job Centre appointments.

Case Study – Mr Deane

<p><b>Case Study</b> Mr Deane*, a prisoner at HMP Featherstone</p>
<p><b>How identified</b> Family Services Coordinator was at Visitor’s Centre and was spoken to by a member of the CARAT team (drugs treatment) about Mr Deane.</p>
<p><b>Scenario</b> Mr Deane had been upset because he wasn’t able to register the birth of his daughter with his partner (and therefore would not have parental responsibility for his child). The FSC agreed to do some research.</p>
<p><b>Action taken</b> The FSC worker found some information on a website about re-registering a birth that would be relevant to Mr Deane. She told CARAT they would need to complete a Form GR0185 and a Form 16 (as Mr Deane would not be able to attend the Registry Office). These forms would then need to be signed by a solicitor. The FSC downloaded the information which was then handed to the CARAT worker.</p>
<p><b>Outcome</b> Mr Deane’s name has now been put onto his daughter’s birth certificate. This case study illustrates the benefit of specialist staff being available to support the resolution of children and family issues. This is the type of activity that the Family Information Service would routinely deliver within the community.</p>

\* Fictitious names have been used.

The Family Services Coordinator has also recruited for the Curriculum Programme, a new FDM project proposal which seeks to make links between individual prisoners and their children’s schools. The programme aims to bring child and father closer together around the theme of the child’s educational programme, facilitating the provision of regular updates on the child’s progress as well as engaging with the school to identify potential prison based activity which could be utilised to complement the child’s curriculum. A total of eight families have consented, and been cleared, to take part in this pilot programme and FDM have now reached agreement with the schools concerned who will shortly be issuing launch packs for the fathers. The FSC will be the contact point for these schools, support the prisoners’ understanding of the information received and help to identify and coordinate complementary activity within the prison.



The FSC recruited and coordinated the delivery of the 'Time for Families Course' which is designed to enable prisoners to improve and develop their relationships with their partners. The prisoner's partners came to the prison every Monday for six weeks to participate in the course. A second course was planned to start in February 2009 but was cancelled due to the lack of resources available within the prison to support the necessary security activity.

## Case Study – Mr Wainwright

### Case Study

Mr Wainwright\*, a prisoner at HMP Featherstone.

### How identified

Mr Wainwright, approached the Family Services Coordinator after recognising her from one of the posters on his house unit.

### Scenario

Mr Wainwright asked the FSC what he could do to maintain family ties as he and his partner (Ms Stepney\*) had been drifting apart and arguing a lot since he had been in prison. He said he had a five year old stepson with Ms Stepney. Arguments between Mr Wainwright and Ms Stepney worsened and she refuses to visit him and told him their relationship was over.

### Action taken

The FSC had started to recruit for the Time for Families Course and asked Mr Wainwright if he and Ms Stepney would be interested in attending (provided he met the necessary security and public protection criteria and his partner agreed to come). In the meantime the Time for Families facilitator had been contacting prisoners' partners and Mrs Stepney had agreed to attend the course. The FSC told Mr Wainwright that she could make a referral to the library for Story Book Dads and to Education for the Parentcraft course.

### Outcome

Mr Wainwright was successful in his application for the TFF course and both he and Mrs Stepney were motivated and engaged throughout the course. At the end of each session Mr Wainwright expressed his gratitude for being able to attend and when they completed the course they both said that it had saved their relationship.

This case study illustrates the benefit of specialist and dedicated children and family staff, identifiable and available to provide targeted support and having access to a range of potential interventions.

\* Fictitious names have been used.

Family Days are not a new concept, running in many other prisons already, and increasingly recognised as an important and desirable part of the prison based work to improve prisoners’ family ties. Similarly, there are some examples of staff performing roles like that of the WFIS worker at HMP Featherstone, invariably third sector employees or volunteers. What is different about the approach at HMP Featherstone is the involvement of statutory service providers, at no cost to the prison. In this example, the statutory services see the delivery of services to these family groups as being their core business. They recognise the issues around family locality and indeed many of those supported are not those who would routinely access services within the Wolverhampton area. The managers at WFIS and Berries, and their wider Wolverhampton based colleagues and management structures, recognise that in this location they have a locally accessible high volume and high need audience for their services. They hope, like the Families Do Matter Project, that their work illustrates to others that this audience can be effectively and efficiently accessed by statutory service providers working in partnership with prison management and staff.



## Testimonials



The project at HMP Featherstone has, and continues to be, one of the most challenging yet effective and worthwhile projects that the Wolverhampton Family Information Service has been involved with. Supported fully by the Management Board, the staff have seen their efforts really make a difference to the families that we have engaged with. The positive outcomes have been too many to list, but seeing the children flourish through the opportunities available on the enhanced family visits is one of the highlights of the project. Wolverhampton Family Information Service would like to thank the prison and the Families Do Matter project for making it possible.

**Jenny Leach**

*Wolverhampton Family Information Service*



I first came into contact with the Families Do Matter project after approaching a representative of the West Midlands Regional Offender Manager’s team at a conference.

That meeting led at a later date to an approach from the project’s new manager who has since been able to help us create a strong partnership in support of delivery at HMP Featherstone. Our long-standing desire to be able to work with prisoners’ families has been made possible by the FDM team’s support and encouragement, and we thank them and Governor Simon Cartwright for their efforts. We strongly believe that organisations like ours must reach out to offenders’ families and can do so by working closely with prisons, bringing statutory children and family services to support activities like family days.

**Mark Lambert**

*Berries Children Centre, Underhill*





## Testimonial



During 2008, The Head of Offender Management and her team have attempted to strengthen provision for prisoners in regards to their children, families and friends. Families Do Matter and their associated partners have helped in this development, further enhancing provision on enhanced family visit days, offered to prisoners who have completed OCN in parentcraft and by part-funding a family link worker with Wolverhampton Families Information Service to offer support to prisoners and their families and other initiatives taken forward through joint working with WFIS; a really valuable addition to our partnership agencies.

The soon to be published pathway needs analysis for 2009 has also highlighted that relationship issues are still prevalent amongst the population now present at HMP Featherstone and as such further work will be taken forward in the forthcoming months, building on the joint working relationships that were established last year.

**Governor Simon Cartwright**

*March 2009*



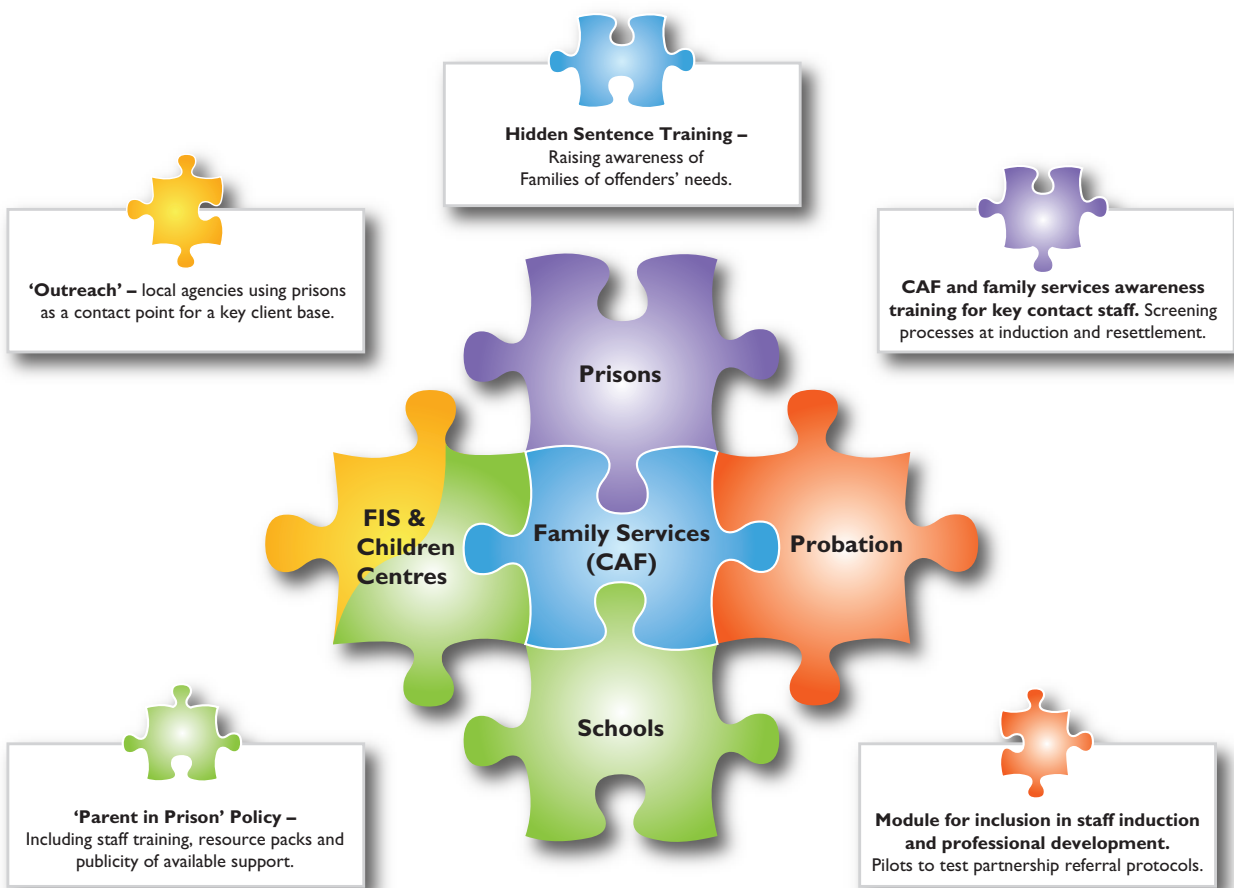
## The project recommends...

- That partnerships are created which will allow family service providers to deliver outreach services at prison establishments, to supplement existing prison based children and family pathway activity. At the least, these partnerships could include disciplines for the provision of family specific information to visitors utilising visitor centres and family information packs at induction. Additionally, opportunities to support family based activities such as family days should be identified. The project believes that statutory service providers such as Family Information Services and Children Centres should deliver their mainstream services at prisons within their area and a strategic approach to doing so at a national level would break down many of the geographic barriers that currently inhibit this approach. Statutory service providers which form such partnerships could play leading roles in the development and delivery of children and family pathway policy and activities more effectively than current arrangement by providing their specialist expertise to support HMPS staff's offender management expertise.
- The project also recommends that designated Family Support Coordinator roles should be developed and implemented at all prisons, whereby specialist and dedicated staff are charged with supporting pathway specific activity and developing the links that the project's community model recommends.

## Summary & Recommendations

The project believes that it has created a model of partnership engagement and activity which can provide the core of a strategic approach to the development of the Children and Family Pathway. Whilst numerous organisations are working in partnership with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on local delivery, there is less coherence in the form of national structures and specifications in this area. The project believes that there is a need for a statutory sector strategic framework, a ‘skeleton’ frame which other organisations can attach to in order to deliver a meaningful and coherent package of activity to support the offender and their family, to reduce reoffending but also to improve the outcomes experienced by this ‘at risk’ group.

### Community Partnership Model





At the heart of that framework should be a strategic partnership between NOMS and DCSF which ensures that those responsible for offender management activity are routinely engaged with those providing services to children and families within the community. Awareness raising training aimed at both sides with practitioners learning about offenders' families' needs and the work of correctional services, and prison and probation staff learning about the services that are available to families and how to support families to access them, is the bedrock of the approach. This engagement at operational delivery level allows, as shown by the project's work, for partnerships to be formed at a local level which can carry this new awareness over into closer working arrangements that can lead to real benefits on the ground. The project believes that awareness raising training needs to be delivered at induction and professional development training for both prisons and probation staff supplemented by a programme of training for existing staff in all locations. FDM's 'Hidden Sentence' training should be cascaded through local authority workforce development teams to all key children and family practitioners. The module designed in partnership with the Midlands Probation Training Consortium should be adopted nationally and a similar module adapted for use in HMPS induction training (POELT).

Ultimately, whilst raising awareness is a positive start, real benefit is only derived when staff and management are provided with the time and processes to put that new knowledge into practice. To that end, the project believes that its early pilots with probation offices and prisons need to be extended with the ultimate objective of identifying and adopting formal protocols and work processes for the identification and referral of offenders and families to appropriate family services. Such protocols must include intervention during the early prison induction processes, expanding the current process to include a full review of family circumstances and the exploration of the potential need for support to be delivered. The project believes that the current Common Assessment Framework (CAF) protocols are a ready-made framework for this approach and one which should be incorporated, as far as is possible, into the work of prisons and probation.

It is clearly the case that work to progress the development of prison based children and family pathway activity is hampered in many establishments by the lack of dedicated resource available. Despite the efforts of the likes of education and chaplaincy teams, the types of initiatives that are developed are at real risk from the lack of time available to support them. Whilst a clearer strategic framework would assist and reduce duplication of effort, it remains the case that real progress will be difficult without the allocation of staff resources. To that end, the project believes that it is time for the adoption of a designated 'Family Support Worker' role within prisons. As has been demonstrated by the project's work in HMP Featherstone, meeting this objective need not be solely the responsibility of NOMS. Ultimately, a strategic partnership between NOMS and DCSF, which sees the smooth flow of information and coordinated services to offenders' families, would necessarily require these roles and it is suggested that the funding for them should be a joint responsibility. Family Support Workers in our prisons would provide a dedicated resource to support the delivery of these strategic developments and also the range of local partnerships and activities that already exist or might flow from this more strategic approach.

Certainly, there is the potential for some resource to be made available through local partnerships of an ‘outreach’ nature, as demonstrated by the work at HMP Featherstone. It is suggested that as local partnerships develop from the awareness raising training they should be a catalyst for further opportunities for joint working to be explored. These opportunities must be pursued by NOMS and DCSF together in recognition that prisons are sites where we can access large concentrations of potentially high-risk families, not merely directly through visiting sessions but indirectly through the prisoners themselves. There seems no reason why partnerships similar to that formed between HMP Featherstone and a local Family Information Service and Children Centre cannot be the norm with such organisations seizing the opportunities to reach into prisons to access this client group. Of course, assistance of this kind will help prisons to deliver on their own objectives to develop children and family pathway activities, and bring much needed expertise in from outside.

Finally, it is suggested that a national policy for engagement with schools needs to be developed. It is regularly reported by teachers and school staff that whilst local intelligence tells them that they have children of prisoners in their schools, they are seldom notified formally and invited to help the child or family. Whilst issues around stigma and fear will always prevent some carers and families from coming forward, it is contended that many will choose not to do so from the simple perspective that no good can come of it. There are no attempts made to communicate to offenders’ families what benefits might be derived from seeking assistance and no training for staff about how they might support these children and families. The project believes that this situation needs to be addressed, if necessary, as part of a wider policy dealing with the issue of absent parents.

The project believes that this five point model has the potential to provide a structure and clarity that will substantially advance the agendas of both NOMS and DCSF in targeting services at offenders and their families.





## The project recommends...

- That 'Hidden Sentence' training and awareness raising activity should be adopted by local authority workforce development teams utilising the project's Train the Trainer package and materials.
- That through the raised awareness within statutory services, partnerships should be formed between children and family services directorates and their authority located prisons and probation offices. These partnerships should seek to increase referrals to family services and improve outcomes experienced by offenders families, utilising the CAF process where appropriate.
- Awareness raising training of the availability of family services, and how to access them, should be delivered to offender management staff and processes agreed and implemented for the identification and referral of potential clients to family service providers.
- Probation training consortia should adopt the training model developed by the project with the Midlands Consortium for inclusion in induction and professional development of staff. A similar approach should be adopted within HMPS.
- That a 'parent in prison' policy should be adopted by local authorities, to include training of key staff, the provision of staff resource packs and publicity materials to encourage families and carers to seek support.
- That partnerships are created which will allow family service providers to deliver outreach services at prison establishments, to supplement existing prison based children and family pathway activity. At the least, these partnerships could include disciplines for the provision of family specific information to visitors utilising visitor centres and family information packs at induction. Additionally, opportunities to support family based activities such as family days should be identified. The project believes that statutory service providers such as Family Information Services and Children Centres should deliver their mainstream services at prisons within their area and a strategic approach to doing so at a national level would break down many of the geographic barriers that currently inhibit this approach. Statutory service providers which form such partnerships could play leading roles in the development and delivery of children and family pathway policy and activities more effectively than current arrangement by providing their specialist expertise to support HMPS staff's offender management expertise.
- The project also recommends that designated Family Support Coordinator roles should be developed and implemented at all prisons, whereby specialist and dedicated staff are charged with supporting pathway specific activity and developing the links that the project's community model recommends.

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- Mary Crowley and staff at the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners;
- Parenting UK;
- Working with Parents Delegates – Rachel Sims, Nicky Martin, Rianne Ward, Helen Meadows, Steph Baker, Helen Cartwright, Mandy Lloyd, Kevin Johns, Denise Bayliffe and Janet Church;



- Phil Griffiths of Shrewsbury Ark;
- Staff at Telford and Wrekin Council, particularly Sally Tyas and staff of the Local Safeguarding Children Board;
- West Midlands CAF coordinators, particularly Louise Instone, Adrian Over and Zoe Churton;
- Rosemary Cooney and staff at APF;
- Staff and management of West Midlands, West Mercia, Staffordshire and Warwickshire Probation;
- Julian Buchanan and team at Glyndwr University, Wrexham;
- Jenny Leech, Hannah Plant and staff of Wolverhampton Family Information Services;
- Mark Lambert and staff at Berries Children's Centre;
- Steering Board members: Clive Wilkinson (Director for Children and Learners GOWM), Tony Howell (Strategic Director - Children, Young People & Families Birmingham City Council), Vivien Brandon (NOMS Policy), Veronica Palgrave (HALOW), Tom Watson (Governor of HMYOI Swinfen Hall) and Patrick Donajgrodzki (Development & Change Manger DOM Team West Midlands);
- Ian Macnair and Michelle Walters at Midlands Regional Probation Training Consortium;
- Annetta Bennett at Kids VIP.



**Families do matter**

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