

Families Outside

Voicing the needs of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland

Bulletin – October 2011



www.familiesoutside.org.uk

families
outside

UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Day of General Discussion – Friday 30th September, Geneva

Biggest-ever child rights discussion day that focused on the children of prisoners

Children whose parents are in prison came under the UN spotlight for the first time ever on the 30th of September 2011. Families Outside, which works solely on behalf of families affected by imprisonment, was one of four Scottish delegates attending.

At the Day of General Discussion, the Committee on the Rights of the Child explored the rights of ‘children of incarcerated parents’. These children have committed no crime but are deeply affected by their parents’ involvement in the criminal justice system. Almost uniquely, children themselves spoke at the main session which, with 250 participants, was likely to have been the biggest ever.

An estimated 16,500 children each year in Scotland experience a parent’s imprisonment – more than experience a parent’s divorce. Despite affecting 800,000 children across Europe and millions of children worldwide, this is the first time that this neglected issue has been discussed substantively anywhere in the UN system. Alongside two prisoners’ children, specialists from Brazil, Pakistan and South Africa also spoke to the Day of General Discussion.

Dr Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive of Families Outside, said “We are pleased to be representing Scotland along with our colleagues and that this issue is finally being recognised. We look forward to feeding in to the UN’s Discussion and informing Scottish policy in turn.”



Photograph of the United Nations building in Geneva.

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WINTER’S BONE

SPECIAL CHARITY SCREENING

6.00pm Tuesday 8 November 2011
Edinburgh Filmhouse



Families Outside invites you to join them for a special charity screening of the multi-award nominated film, “Winter’s Bone”.

“Winter’s Bone” tells the story of 17-year-old Ree Dolly (Jennifer Lawrence), who sets out to track down her father after he put their house up for his bail bond and then disappeared. If she fails, Ree and her family will be evicted. Challenging her outlaw kin’s code of silence and risking her life, Ree hacks through the lies, evasions and threats offered up by her relatives and begins to piece together the truth.

Winner of the Best Picture Grand Jury Prize at the 2010 Sundance Festival and nominated for four Academy Awards (Best Film, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor and Best Adapted Screenplay), among other accolades, the film gives a harrowing account of the impact on the innocent when a family member is involved in the criminal justice process.

After the screening Families Outside, will host a discussion of the issues the film raises.

- 6.00pm Intro with Nancy Loucks, trailers
- 6.15pm Film Screening
- 7.50pm Panel Discussion Starts
- 8.20pm Panel Discussion Ends

CROSS PARTY GROUP

Mary Fee MSP and Dr Nancy Loucks from Families Outside have announced the setting up of a Cross Party Group on Families Affected by Imprisonment.

The detrimental effects of imprisonment on children and families facing a relative’s imprisonment are clearly evident, and more must be done to help all those affected, as families are the invisible victims of imprisonment. Cross-party and cross-committee approaches (justice, health and mental health, substance misuse, education, early years, housing, travel & transport, preventative spending) are essential to address the issues that children and families of prisoners face.

Following the high level of interest in the group, we can confirm details for the first meeting as follows:

The Scottish Parliament
1.00pm to 2.30pm on 26 October 2011

20TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

The 20th Anniversary Conference of Families Outside will take place at The Falkirk Wheel on 1 November 2011. Chaired by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Brigadier Hugh Monro, the event is **fully booked**.

Confirmed speakers include Drs Linda Moore and Una Convery from the University of Ulster (presenting European research on children of prisoners); Karyn McCluskey (Co-Director, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit); Gavin Oattes (Tree of Knowledge); and a number of family members who have agreed to share their experiences.



WEBSITE HITS (19/07/11 – 10/10/11)

32,528

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Families Outside continues to conduct training for new recruits at the Scottish Prison Service and Lothian & Borders Police as well as awareness-raising as part of the Life/Time project in Lothian & Borders secondary schools. In addition to these, training and awareness-raising this quarter has included the following:

- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion in Geneva;
- Samaritans Annual Conference;
- Common Purpose Meridian Leadership Development course;
- National Family Contact Officer Forum at HMYOI Polmont
- South West CJA Family Strategy Group event, 'The Hidden Sentence: Supporting Families in the Criminal Justice System';
- Article in September edition of *Children in Scotland Magazine*;
- Input to *Supporting Parents to Be All They Can Be: Using Scottish Evidence to Influence Scottish Solutions for Supporting Parents Event Report* (Scottish Government, September 2011).

Further, we held an event in Parliament on 20 September to gather information from families and practitioners to take to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion in Geneva. Hosted by Christine Grahame, Convenor of the Justice Committee, formal contributions came from Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People Tam Baillie; HM Chief Inspector of Prison Hugh Munro; Governor of HMP Low Moss Mick Stoney; and written submissions from a prisoner and his mother. Approximately 40 people attended, in addition to interested MSPs, and contributed feedback both verbally and in writing.

This quarter has continued with requests for input to various reports, consultations and research:

- EU Draft Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime;
- Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights 'State of Children's Rights' survey;
- Submission of key priorities to the Scottish Government Committees on Education and Culture; Equal Opportunities; Finance; Health and Sport; Infrastructure and Capital Investment; and Justice;
- Notes of interest to the proposed Scottish Government Cross-Party Groups on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse; Carers; Children & Young People; Dyslexia; Drugs and Alcohol Misuse; Human Rights; Learning Disability; Mental Health; Older People, Age and Aging; and Racial Equality;
- Draft consultation on the Good Practice Guidance: Diversion to Social Work and Other Agencies;
- Scrutiny of the forthcoming spending review and Draft Budget 2012-13: Preventative Spending – General call for evidence;
- Oral evidence by invitation to the Angiolini Commission on Women Offenders.

Finally, Freshsight (a University of Edinburgh group which provides pro bono consultancy to non-profit organisations) has agreed to advise us regarding our marketing to children and young people and use of social networking.

GIVING FAMILIES A VOICE

We are always looking for people who are willing to share their experiences of having a family member caught up in the criminal justice system. If this is of interest to you, please let us know - we are always ready to hear your story.

Tel 0131 557 9800 Email admin@familiesoutside.org.uk

NEW PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Families Outside has produced a number of new publications, one of which, **In Brief 6**, looks at the value of family support work. The publication focuses on why families require this support, what support is as well as access to such support networks and the potential for future developments.

Two new Information Sheets are also available covering the issues of preparing for a prison sentence and what should be expected when starting a prison sentence. An information sheets on parole will be available soon.

<http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/research-publications>



PRAISE FOR PERTH PRISON VISITORS' CENTRE

Scotland's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Brigadier Hugh Monro, recently visited Perth Prison Visitors' Centre run by Crossreach.

Since his visit, the Chief Inspector has made clear that he feels that the most important part of a prisoner's time in prison is how their family links in to them. Currently, he has concerns about the quality of family contact for prisoners in Scotland - something he would like to see improved.

Families Outside believes that more than the three current prison visitors centres should be in place. The Chief Inspector is unequivocal about his praise for the Crossreach run Perth Prison Visitors' Centre as well as his belief that every prison should have a visitors' centre. The fact that prisoners' families often use one or more forms of public transport to get to a prison can make the time they arrive at the prison difficult to plan. Prison visitors' centres provide somewhere for families to go, to get warm and comfortable and to talk to someone who can help and support them.

Perth Prison Visitors' Centre has recently been hailed by Cabinet Secretary for Justice Kenny MacAskill. The centre also recently received funding thanks to the work of Church of Scotland Guild members across Scotland.



Families Outside
Support & Information Helpline

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