

Families Outside

Voicing the needs of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland

Bulletin – July 2014

www.familiesoutside.org.uk



voicing the needs of families affected by imprisonment

FAMILIES OUTSIDE ROAD TRIP

Working alongside prisons to promote the family agenda

At the start of July, our CEO (Nancy - driving the camper) and Deputy CEO (Elaine - the navigator) visited a number of establishments on the early part of a tour of all Scottish prisons, all conducted and fitting in with the fabulous weather. Scotland has never looked better!

We were warmly welcomed by all prisons, and met a range of staff including Governors, Offender Outcomes Managers, Heads of Operations, Family Contact Officers, and Residential Managers. Amongst other things, we learned about the new work being carried out in relation to throughcare and parenting officers. We discussed the Children's visits and family events prisons are involved in (many Commonwealth and World Cup themed events taking place over the summer). We spoke about Child Protection, staff training, and information available at prisons for family members, and about perceived gaps – and where Families Outside might fit in and support the prison to plug these gaps.

Some good ideas came out of the discussions, and we will be taking these forward. We found excellent pockets of good practice throughout the estate, including: the work of Parenting Officers; the possibility of taking ICM into the community (Open Estate); First Day at School events; a real enthusiasm for virtual visits; volunteer provision; development of in-house bistros - where cookery skills can be honed and developed prior to prisoners being released back into the community; and excitement around the new Visitors' Centres currently being built.

We still have a few prisons to reach, and we be will getting back in the camper at the end of July, after which we will be completing a fuller narrative on our trip. To date, it has been an extremely positive experience for us, and thanks must be made for the time, welcome and hospitality offered to us on our journey. We hope that we too were able to offer some positive thoughts and comments on the family agenda that Scottish prisons are certainly immersed in at present, and that positive relations will continue.



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SCHOOL — PRISON LINK PROJECT

HMP Low Moss has begun an exciting new initiative to help dads to be more closely involved in their children's education. The school/prison link project means that dads receive reports and updates directly from the school, while Families Outside helps teachers support these families better. Already we've had some great conversations with school staff and families, and the feedback so far has been very positive.

IN TUNE - VOX LIMINIS

Since the start of the year, Families Outside and Vox Liminis having been running the **In Tune project** at HMP Addiewell, with the project due to run throughout 2014.



Over a series of workshops led by experienced music leaders Kim Edgar and Jane Bentley, In Tune brings families together through music. As Kim comments, "I've seen first-hand how powerful music can be as a tool for positive change in people's lives - and I'm hoping that In Tune will give families time to have fun, relax, and feel closer to each other at a time which can be stressful and isolating."

Prof Fergus McNeill of the University of Glasgow, and Vox Liminis Board member, says "Sustaining family ties is one of the most important ways that prisons can reduce reoffending and support integration, but prison visits can be hard for everyone involved - especially children. So, finding new and creative ways to connect people in prison and their families is extremely important, and is in everyone's best interests."

Thanks to funding from The BLF Communities and Families Fund, prisoners and their families are able to experience interaction of a very different kind as they create, perform, and record music together. Each set of workshops ends with a celebration concert, and participants receive a CD of their very own musical creations.

HELPLINE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

The first ever **Annual Report for our Support & Information Helpline** is now available online. Over 37,500 people are committed to custody each year in Scotland. Those imprisoned leave behind children, parents, partners, and other family members whose experience of imprisonment can be significant and enduring. The report highlights the issues that families require support and guidance with (travel, social welfare, visits, HDC, transfers and emotional support) and provides statistical data such as on calls per prison, involvement of other organisations, and callers' relationships to prisoners.



The annual report of our Family Support Work will be published in August 2014 and will also be available on our website.

CASE STUDY: THE REAL POWER OF PEER SUPPORT



We're a small team, and we can't be everywhere so it's great to see local support groups for family members affected by imprisonment! In 2013, members of our team were delighted to attend an open day on the west coast of Scotland for family members and the professionals who support them. The founding member of the group gave this moving speech:

"As a group we have all been affected by imprisonment in one way or another. Over the years, I have struggled with finding support; at the start of this year I went to a conference in Glasgow where I was quite surprised by the amount of agency support there is for those in the central belt. Then I met someone at my granddaughter's nursery who was also affected by imprisonment; we got talking one day, opening up about the problems we have faced.

In May, we got together for our first meeting. This is a small town, and we all shared the same opinion that this made it all the more difficult, as people can be very judgemental, and you can feel very alone, vulnerable, and stigmatised. We realised that if we felt like that, there must be a lot of others feeling the same way. Since May, we have had weekly meetings for family members, designed our literature, had meetings with agencies, and attended training courses.

The aim of our group is to offer support to all those affected by imprisonment in this area - from those facing a custodial sentence, to those returning to the area after a sentence and also for those left behind when a loved one has received a custodial sentence. We have information about prison, and a lot of information from the organisation Families Outside.

We offer emotional support to family members and also signpost to agencies that can help further. We have learned a great deal from our meetings with agencies, and we need the expertise and support from professionals. We feel as a group we could bridge the gap between agencies and people, so that there will no longer be a 'them and us' attitude.

We feel we are a strong group as we have all experienced the different aspects of how hard it can be and wondering what kind of support we can get. We are purely a volunteer group and have chosen to remain voluntary for the foreseeable future. We are passionate about what we are doing and why we are doing it."

If you are interested in starting a local support group, call the Families Outside Helpline. Life is easier if we're in it together!

COPE CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

"Presentations were very informative and gave so much insight into kids and how they feel."

Following the Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) annual conference we hosted in Edinburgh this May, we are delighted to report that the vast majority of delegates felt the day was a great success. Importantly, the event informed COPE's annual network meeting and prison visit over the next two days.

"The presentations covered many different areas, countries and perspectives. ALL were inspiring. Really a great event."



ALL HAIL TO THE CEILIDH!

Thursday 5th June was a night to remember! With Jed Milroy and his friend Roddy on music, we danced the night away in the Counting House in Edinburgh with a few good old traditional dances as well as a few more creative jigs!

Run in conjunction with the annual **Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) campaign, 'Not my Crime, Still my Sentence'**, the ceilidh was a great way of increasing awareness, having fun, and of course raising money!



We had some fabulous raffle prizes including afternoon teas at both Prestonfield House and the Caledonia Hotel, dinner at Angels Share, a garden bench made by residents of HMP Edinburgh, and a minibreak for two people on the Mull of Kintyre.

We were very pleased to raise £650 and would like to thank everyone involved for making it such a success!

WELCOME BACK, HIYA, AND A FOND FAREWELL

We are delighted to welcome back Kerry Knox to the fray. Having been on maternity leave, Kerry returned to us at the start of July and will be working with families affected by imprisonment in Fife, linking in with services offering (or that could be offering) these vulnerable families support.



And hiya to Neil Allan, who we are pleased to have join us on secondment from SPS. Neil has taken on the role of Volunteer Coordinator, developing the pool of volunteers established by our first SPS secondee, Dimitra Perrou.

Lastly, we say a fond farewell to our colleague, Diana Fraser, who has been working at our visitors' centre at HMP Addiewell. Diana will be leaving us in August to continue her higher education. Good luck Diana, and many thanks for all your work in supporting the families at HMP Addiewell.

SEEKING A FAMILY MEMBER TO JOIN OUR BOARD

Families Outside is currently seeking a family member affected by imprisonment to join its Board of Trustees. We are looking for a family member to add their own powerful voice to those of the other trustees, giving a first-hand perspective on families' experiences while also being committed to the values of the organisation and passionate about promoting an excellent service for families affected by imprisonment.

Quarterly Board meetings held in Edinburgh, usually morning.

For an application pack email admin@familiesoutside.org.uk or tel. 0131 557 9800.

Families Outside

Support & Information Helpline

Freephone 0500 83 93 83

answerphone if not available

support@familiesoutside.org.uk

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