



voicing the needs
of families affected
by imprisonment

Report of In-Prison CPD Opportunity for Teachers

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Background

Building on the success of sessions in 2013, our in-prison CPD (Continuing Professional Development) opportunities were offered to teachers across Scotland throughout 2014. Training for teachers is key in helping school staff to identify and support, appropriately and sensitively, some of Scotland's most vulnerable and yet largely overlooked children; undertaking this training within a prison adds to the impact of their awareness. Run in partnership between SPS (and in the case of contracted out prisons, Sodexo Services and Serco) and Families Outside staff, the interactive programme allows teachers and support staff to experience each stage of a prison visit; to enter into the stories of children affected; and ultimately to learn how they can make a difference.

Overview

Throughout 2014, in-prison CPD sessions were held in the following prisons:

- HMP Addiewell;
- HMP Barlinnie;
- HMP Cornton Vale;
- HMP Dumfries (2 sessions);
- HMP Edinburgh (3 sessions);
- HMP Glenochil (2 sessions);
- HMP Greenock;
- HMP Inverness;
- HMP Kilmarnock;
- HMP Low Moss (2 sessions);
- HMP Perth; and
- HMP Polmont.

498 participants (a 33% increase from 2013) attended sessions over the year, the majority being primary and secondary school teachers (including some teachers in training) and a small number of voluntary sector staff. The programme varied slightly from prison to prison but included in all prisons an overview of the main issues; a chance to walk the journey of children and families who visit the prison; and an insight into the crucial role that school communities play in supporting children and families affected by imprisonment. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the sessions, with 100% saying that it was helpful to them.

Comments include:

- "I now have an insight into what the pupils experience when a parent goes to prison."
- "I currently work with families affected by these issues, and I have learned lots of practical tools and strategies from this session."
- "Very powerful and thought provoking. Well organised - delivered with passion and commitment."
- "Thank you so much for an informative CPD event. It certainly left me thinking.....it is vital that these children and young people are appropriately supported."

Key Strengths

The key strengths of this initiative are:

- It is held inside prison giving teachers a unique insight into the issues and challenges;
- It is facilitated in partnership between Families Outside, the SPS (and contracted out prisons), and Visitor Centre staff (where applicable);
- It builds links with the education department within local authorities;
- The twilight timings minimise cover costs for schools;
- The focus is on children and their families, rather than on the prisoner;
- The programme is interactive and varied;
- Each session is evaluated, and comments are used to inform further sessions;
- It encourages ongoing links between schools and the SPS; and
- It strengthens links between schools and Families Outside.

Evidence of impact

As well as teachers' comments, which clearly show that the CPD sessions have had an enormous impact, the following email from a teacher demonstrates how this impact translates into action, which in turn improves support for families:

"As a direct result of our [prison] visit yesterday, my colleague and I felt confident enough to speak to one of our parents this morning and ask her about the issues that she faces relating to her partner being in prison. It really opened up a useful and valuable dialogue with the mum, and we found out more about the family circumstances and specifically about how we could help her and son's understanding of what was happening to them. It also proved really useful because mum had never heard of [Families Outside] ... we were able to give her your leaflets and information, for which she was really grateful. It is really great when a visit [to prison] enhances our links with our parents and has already shown real benefits to ourselves, our children and the mum! Just wanted to say how much it has impacted already and hopefully will open up many more links in the future." (participant on in-prison CPD session)

In addition, we are delighted that one local authority's education department is now part-funding one of our Regional & Family Support Coordinator posts, thus ensuring that families affected by imprisonment remain right at the heart of the authority's vision for improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

Here are some further positive outcomes:

- There has been an increase in calls to the Families Outside Helpline from teachers who have attended the sessions (and, in some cases, other colleagues from their schools), following up on individual pupils;
- Referrals to the Families Outside Family Support Team have been generated following sessions;
- Some teachers have been able to link with the parent in prison;
- One teacher was able to conduct a course selection interview with a pupil and his imprisoned father in prison, which resulted in an increase in both the pupil's aspirations and his father's belief in him;
- Some teachers have contacted the SPS with a view to volunteering in existing programmes (e.g. homework clubs);
- There is a recognition of the benefits of someone from education sitting on Child & Family Strategy Groups (which is now happening in at least two prisons);

- Several teachers have asked if they could use our resources to roll out the training within their own schools; and
- One prison recognised the importance of engaging with teachers to such an extent that a prison officer was released to co-deliver workshops to over 300 probationer teachers across four local authorities.

Going forward

Many teachers have asked for a more in-depth session around strategies for how best to support children affected by imprisonment, and we are looking at this for 2015. In addition, we are developing PSE (Personal and Social Education) materials which can be used by teachers and resources for school assemblies. We aim to produce a pack of support materials for teachers to use with groups and individual pupils.

Conclusion

This initiative is an excellent example of partnership working and clearly has an enormous impact on those working directly with vulnerable children and families. Families Outside welcomes the opportunity to work with the SPS and contracted out establishments in this way.