

Families Outside

Voicing the needs of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland

Bulletin - July 2017

www.familiesoutside.org.uk



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POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AT THE POINT OF ARREST

Discussion points, learning curves, outcomes...and a way forward.

On 31 May this year, Families Outside hosted a national conference on improving support for families at the point of arrest. The conference highlighted clearly the trauma of witnessing a family member's arrest, exploring ways to address this. Of note was Clore Social Research Fellow Jo Tilley-Riley's research into the experiences of children and young people who witness an arrest from their home. Recognising imprisonment of a household member as an Adverse Childhood Experience, Jo recommended a need to identify the scale of this experience; research to identify what would make a difference; a programme to support youth advocates; and training for the police. You can read Jo's full report [here](#). Click the image above to see [Ollie's Story](#) – a short animation of a young person's experience of a family member's arrest.



Another feature of the day was Commander Greg McEachern of the San Francisco Police Dept, who talked about their ground-breaking work on planning for arrest when children may be present. With a focus on minimising harm, the SFPD avoids home arrests, ensures care is in place for any children left behind, and trains every police officer to comply with protocols for arrest and trauma-informed practice.

Closer to home, Police Constable Tracey Gunn gave a personal account of her development of the 'Meet the Police' project at HMP Edinburgh, aimed at improving public relations with the police and reducing trauma amongst children and young people who have witnessed an arrest. Her work is based on the fact that "every child deserves to feel safe, loved, and have fun!"

We are pleased to be taking forward discussions on the main themes from the conference with colleagues from Police Scotland:

1. [develop new Police contact card/information for families at the point of arrest and agree guidelines for use;](#)
2. [agree protocols for arrest when children may be present \(ensuring arrest takes place away from family wherever possible\);](#)
3. [raise awareness of national framework for Support to Families Affected by the Criminal Justice System;](#)
4. [discuss possible extension of 'Meet the Police' type programmes with prison visitor centres and schools throughout Scotland.](#)

We will take it one step at a time, but are delighted to have this level of engagement and commitment to improve the experience for families from Police Scotland. We will keep you posted on developments.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP, RAISING THE STANDARD - PRISON VISITORS' CENTRE CONFERENCE

Andrew McLellan, Chair of the National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group, unveiled a new National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres at the Working In Partnership, Raising the Standard conference on 19 June.

Among the most powerful presentations of the day were from Amie Robertson and Lesley and Amy Ash on their own experiences of having a family member in prison. Lesley told us "It took me two weeks to walk out of my own door – help was what I needed... Neighbours, friends, the church offered me help." Watching the video [Invisible Walls Wales](#), Lesley said "That is exactly what it was like for us." Amie told us "We want a future where the topic of family imprisonment is not silenced and where those with lived experience of this issue have a voice." The [KIN project](#), through art, gives young people affected by family imprisonment that voice.



The new [Scottish Prison Service Family Strategy](#) was presented to delegates, and there was considerable interest around the screening of [Resilience – the biology of stress and the science of hope](#) exploring long term health impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) including trauma associated with parental imprisonment.

Corin Morgan-Armstrong shared how HMP Parc in Wales became the first prison to receive accreditation as an Investor In Families and called on prisons in Scotland to follow suit. Since shifting from a security-led to a family-led model for visits, they have gone from having one major visit hall incident per week to three in seven years, and 69% of prisoners there now receive regular visits against a national average of just 48%. The innovative approach HMP Parc has taken to supporting families is explored in the C4 documentary, [Dads Behind Bars](#).

CHANGES TO THE ASSISTED PRISON VISITS SCHEME

Financial help is available from the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) to allow close relatives and partners in the UK to visit prisoners. Details on what is covered by the APVU Scheme and who is eligible to claim is available from Citizens Advice Scotland by clicking on this link. There have been recent changes to the application process for APVU. In most cases claims must now be made using the online form at <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-prison-visits>. Applicants can apply online and add photos of eligibility, receipts, confirmation of visits or rail tickets. The old paper claim forms are no longer being accepted, but any applicants who have difficulty accessing the online form or making a claim online should contact the Digital Assist phone line on 0300 063 2100 which can provide advice and support for online claims or issue a paper application form if necessary.

In most cases payment will be made directly to the applicant's bank account within a few days of submitting a claim. Applicants who do not have access to a bank account can be sent a payment voucher, which comes by post from the Post Office and takes the form of a barcode. This can then be cashed at Post Offices across the country. Applicants for APVU in Scotland who have any difficulties in submitting an application online can contact our own Helpline on 0800 254 0088 for assistance.

FAMILY CASE STUDY OF OUR SUPPORT WORK

Liam was 4 years old when he started engaging with our Regional Family Support Coordinator (RFSC) in the Visitors' Centre. He was visiting his uncle twice a week, and his dad brought him into the centre for lunch to relax before their visit. Liam always came to the RFSC to chat and draw. During these chats, Liam would talk about his uncle, and it became apparent that he did not know that he was visiting a prison. He had been told that his uncle was working in a chocolate factory; Liam was clearly confused by this and upset when visiting did not result in being given chocolate! Through Liam, the RFSC began talking with his dad, Michael. They were able to discuss telling Liam the truth about prison and ways that they could do this. Michael agreed that Liam would soon be able to read and would become aware of where he was visiting, but he was also extremely anxious and unwilling to tell Liam.

After four months of building a relationship with Liam and Michael in the Centre, Michael came to the RFSC to explain that he had recently been arrested and was awaiting sentence, for what was most likely going to be a prison sentence. He was very upset but felt it would be a good time to tell Liam the truth about visiting the prison and prepare him for his sentence. The RFSC introduced them both to the visitors' centre's Children and Parenting Support Worker, who facilitates the children's visits in the prison. She explained to them what to expect from children's visits and how these differed from usual visits. This reduced Michael's anxiety. The RFSC was also able to sit with Liam and answer his many questions, such as "Will daddy get a bed?" She was also able to show him a photo of a cell, so he knew where his dad would be sleeping.

Michael was given a 6-month sentence. Liam was brought to visits by his aunt. He was slightly anxious and upset before his first visit to see his dad, but he knew what to expect from the visits and, thanks to the work that we were able to do with his dad in the Visitors' Centre, Liam had a good understanding of why his dad was there which meant he was able to maintain a strong relationship with him. The Visitors' Centre provided an ideal informal atmosphere in order to build a relationships with Liam, as well as preparing him and putting him at ease during the visit.

COPE 2017

Throughout June each year, COPE runs an annual pan-European campaign called **Not my crime, still my sentence**. The campaign takes place every year carried by COPE's members across Europe and as far away as Brazil, USA and New Zealand. The campaign targets key policymakers as well as the media and general public, using online tools, videos, artwork, emails and social media. This year, the campaign has two focuses:

1. to improve the prison visits experience for children visiting their imprisoned parent;
2. to reach out to those children not yet receiving support from COPE members and perhaps not yet in contact with their imprisoned parent.

For more on the campaign and to find out how you could get involved please [click here](#) to visit the site.



THEY'VE BEEN SENT TO PRISON

We have been delighted with the uptake from both the new Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and the NHS with our card and poster campaign: a simple and straight to the point concept to raise awareness of the support and information we provide to families that are affected by imprisonment across Scotland.



CPPs: Of the 32 new local authority based CPPs we have already had buy in from Renfrewshire, Midlothian, Fife and Angus for branded versions of the posters and cards, showing each local authority areas support for the service we provide. Each CPP will take their own approach in terms of distribution, but expect to see the cards and posters available in GP surgery waiting areas, social work office public areas, council buildings including town halls and libraries, local housing and homeless services, and Sheriff Courts (with social work staff also distributing the support information to families at custody courts). We are continuing to make contact with all CPPs and will be promoting this simple, effective and inexpensive way to raise awareness of our service for families affected by imprisonment: an all too often overlooked and vulnerable group in society. However, if any CPP Lead Officers would like to make contact with us themselves to arrange for cards and posters for their own local authority area, please do get in touch by [clicking on this link](#)

NHS: We continue to make inroads with the NHS and now have posters and cards into a number of NHS hospitals: Vale of Leven Hospital; Royal Alexandria Hospital; Gartnavel General Hospital; Leverdale Hospital; Gartnavel Royal (Mental Health) Hospital; and Royal Hospital for Children. More recently we established links with Practitioner Services in Glasgow and are delighted to report that a poster will now be distributed to all **242 GP practices** in the Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS area. We will continue to push for more distribution throughout the NHS, but must thank Louise Gallagher from NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde for all her support in what we have managed to achieve to date.



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SMS 60777 Text Famout then your message

