

**‘Prison Without Bars’:
Needs, support, and good practice for work with Prisoners’ Families**

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1. BACKGROUND

Our knowledge of the experience of prisoners’ families, and in particular children, in Scotland is very limited. Greater knowledge would allow for the development of more appropriate services and could aid in the reduction of the stigmatising nature of the experience. In general, research is required on the emotional, social, physical and financial effects of imprisonment on partners and children at different stages in the course of a prison sentence (Peart and Asquith 1992)

1.1 Over a decade after Peart and Asquith’s research, we know little more about prisoners’ families in Scotland as potential users of social care services in their own right. This applies as much to the number and distribution of these families as to an understanding of their distinct needs. Reports into the social and economic costs of imprisonment often overlook the consequences of imprisonment on families completely (for example Brand and Price 2000).

1.2 However, as a result of collaboration between Families Outside, its member agencies, and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), more is now known about the impact of imprisonment of a family member on the children of these families. The report, *More Than a Box of Toys* (Buist 1997), highlighted the experiences of children visiting prison and led to development of a set of standards for prisons to use to improve their facilities and approach. *Teenagers with a Family Member in Prison* (McCulloch and Morrison 2001) evidenced the exclusion of young people with a relative in prison and the distress experienced throughout the process from arrest through to custody.

1.3 Many of these families remain hidden within larger populations of marginalised groups in local communities, such as single mothers. Some do not wish to be identified, not least because of the stigma attached to them in the public mind and its practical consequences; the stigma of a custodial penalty passes on to the family, with a number of labels, stereotypes, and assumptions materialising in the day-to-day lives of prisoners' relatives (Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee 1997).

1.4 The profile of these families that has emerged so far from research and from the experience of agencies that work in this area is:

- The experience of imprisonment of a relative is traumatic for the rest of the family and carries huge emotional and financial costs, including the cost of maintaining contact through prison visits (Families Outside 2003);
- All need emotional and practical help to cope;
- Most live in deprived areas, are poor, and have childcare responsibilities. Families living in rural areas face pressures due to greater exposure in their communities and difficulties in accessing support services and maintaining contact with their relative;
- For many, the experience of imprisonment aggravates underlying problems that are already putting strains on family life including financial hardship, social isolation, poor self-esteem, childcare problems, health problems, relationship difficulties, domestic violence, substance misuse, and the threat of homelessness; and
- The impact on children and teenage members of the family is significant and enduring.

This profile remains partial, fragmented, and inadequate as a basis for a coherent, strategic response to the needs of prisoners' families as a whole. The continuing tendency is to view their problems from the perspective of the prisoner and from the legitimate but narrower concerns of Scottish Prison Service. This pays scant attention to the diversity of these families, to their different needs, and to the need for an integrated approach to meeting these. This is essential so that families, especially children, are disadvantaged as little as possible by the imprisonment of a relative, so the imprisoned relative is able to maintain their parenting role effectively within their family, and so the family can play their part (where desired) in supporting their family member in the process of resettlement and reintegration on release.

1.5 The wisdom of experience from agencies working with these families in the community has not been systematically collated and tested from the perspective of service users. As a consequence, policy makers and service planners have not been in a position to make informed decisions about how to respond to the needs of these families through initiatives rolling out from the Scottish policies for Inclusion, Criminal Justice, and Children and Young People.

1.6 New responsibilities for Local Authorities in relation to these families as part of criminal justice throughcare strategies has stimulated discussion of this proposal between the Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership, the Childcare Division of Dundee City Council, and Families Outside. As the first stage of more in-depth work on addressing the needs of prisoners' families in practice, these groups commissioned the current review of the existing literature and services available for prisoners' families both locally and internationally. The review identifies research evidence from the UK and internationally on:

- The impact on children of losing a parent to imprisonment in the short, medium and long term;
- Key pressure points for families;
- What services exist to meet the needs of prisoners families in Scotland, the UK and internationally;
- What evidence exists on 'what works' with families; and
- What support families need/want/would accept in helping their family member reintegrate into the community and resume their parental role.

1.7 For the purposes of the review and subsequent research, prisoners' families are defined as those who have (or have had) a significant relationship with the prisoner, who experience difficulties associated with imprisonment of that prisoner, and who may need support in their own right to deal successfully with these difficulties.

1.8 The review aims to present a comprehensive picture of the issues based on information from academic research, government agencies, and interest groups internationally. The information comes from published and unpublished reports, websites, and internet data bases. The resulting data will be used to:

- Inform the design of the written questionnaire and any follow up consultation exercise;
- Provide a basis for comparing the views of prisoners' families and service agencies about the needs of these families and how best to address them; and
- Inform any conclusions and recommendations for future action in response to the findings of the investigation as a whole.

2. THE IMPACT OF IMPRISONMENT

2.1 Imprisonment is a family experience. For prisoners, separation from loved ones is often the most painful consequence of incarceration. Prisoners place enormous significance on family contact such as letters, telephone calls, and visits. Indeed, family breakdown has been cited as a risk factor for suicides in custody (Akhurst, Brown, and Wessely 1995). Families suffer the pain of separation but also feel the impact of imprisonment in other ways, such as loss of income, loss of home, anti-social behaviour by children in distress, and shame. While much of the research and support services concentrate on the imprisonment of partners or parents, the incarceration of any close family member - including siblings, aunts, uncles, or grandparents - can have a material impact on people's lives (Action for Prisoners' Families 2003c; Wolleswinkel 2002).

2.2 Despite the common experience of the incarceration of a family member, these individuals are far from a homogeneous group (McEvoy et al. 1999). Black and Asian families (Light 1995), broken or non-nuclear families (Paylor and Smith 1994), families of female prisoners (Caddle and Crisp 1997), and families of older prisoners (Codd 1997) will all face different hardships during a family member's imprisonment. Families' experiences are also

likely to vary with the length of imprisonment and the type of offence (Shaw 1987). This section examines the impact of imprisonment on the families of people in custody, first looking specifically at the effects on children, then at the pressures families face as a whole.

Impact on children

2.3 The Home Office consultation paper in England and Wales, *Every Child Matters*, states:

The bond between the child and their parents is the most critical influence on a child's life. Parenting has a strong impact on a child's educational development, behaviour, and mental health.... We need to pay more attention to the critical relationships between children and their families and provide them with better support. We should recognise the vital role played by fathers as well as mothers. (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003: 3.1 and 1.18)

The paper then says that about 150,000 children a year in the UK are separated from an imprisoned parent,¹ with an estimated 13,500 of these in Scotland (Scottish Prison Service 2002). The generally young age of prisoners and the high frequency of disrupted relationships in their own backgrounds means the risk of disrupted relations between prisoners and their children is especially high (Dunn 2003).

Care arrangements

2.4 Children of male prisoners are more likely to remain in the care of the other parent; children of female prisoners, on the other hand, are very likely to face a number of placements during their mother's imprisonment (Gabel and Johnston 1995; Seymour and Hairston 1998; Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System 2003). Probably because of this, problematic behaviour among children has been found to be more common when the mother rather than the father is imprisoned (Richards and McWilliams 1996). One survey found that about a third of young people with a family member in prison in England were themselves removed to other care arrangements or to other parts of the country following the imprisonment (Brown 2001). Siblings may be separated and placed with different substitute carers, as was the

¹ Other estimates place this figure at 125,000 (Prison Reform Trust 2000; Action for Prisoners' Families 2003b), though the higher estimate may be based on recent increases in the prison population.

case for 10% of families of women in HMP Holloway (King 1994), and children have little say in where they are sent to live and with whom (Katz 2003). Children put into care frequently remain there for some time after their original carer's release from custody (Wolfe 1999). Housing can be a factor in this: a woman released from prison may not be given priority status for long-term local authority housing until she has her children with her, but her children will not be returned to her until she has secured long-term housing (Carlen 1990).

Physical and mental health

2.5 Children of incarcerated parents are at increased risk for emotional and behavioural problems, not least because of their exposure to more risk factors generally such as parental substance abuse, extreme poverty, and abuse or neglect (Phillips et al. 2002; see also Bouregba 2001). Some research has found that almost a third (30%) of prisoners' children suffer significant mental health problems, compared to 10% of children generally (Philbrick 1997). Incarceration of a mother in particular disrupts not only the mother-child relationship but also the child's emotional development (Thompson and Harm 2000). Payne notes that "Imprisonment has destructive effects on a family: the instability, the financial distress, the burdens of the remaining carer and the psychological difficulties of the child, such as guilt and acute insecurity, manifesting themselves as disturbed behaviour" (1997: 42-43). About two-thirds (63%) of partners of prisoners in Northern Ireland said their children were not coping well with the imprisonment of the parent (McEvoy et al. 1999).

2.6 Research in California noted that children of incarcerated parents are five to six times more likely to go to prison than their peers (Johnston 1995). This may be the result of a combination of disadvantages such as poverty and insecure housing rather than a criminal parent *per se* (i.e. Wolfe 1999). In such circumstances parental conviction is just one of a number of risk factors for later criminality (Farrington 1989; also DeAngelis 2001). Others claim that a relationship between parental criminality and later offending is still evident even for children whose socio-economic background is the same (McPeck and Tse 1988; Butterfield 1999). Butterfield comments that visiting a parent in prison may cause prison to lose its stigma, that children may begin to 'make a hero' out of the imprisoned parent, and that prison becomes part of 'normal' life. Gorman-Smith and colleagues (1998) argue that the association between parental offending and later delinquency in children is more to do with the children being raised

in an environment in which, they believe, the family tolerates, supports, or even encourages criminal behaviour.

2.7 Grimshaw and King (2002) summarise risks to children following the imprisonment of a parent found in the literature internationally. These risks include stressful identification with the parent's plight; insecurity and fear of abandonment; 'survivor guilt'; uncertainty about the situation; fear of disclosure; stigma; racism and threats to cultural identity; aggression as a response to trauma; low self-esteem; and problems in school (p. 24; also McCulloch and Morrison 2001). Physical symptoms such as increased health problems and regressive behaviour such as bed-wetting can also begin with the incarceration of a parent or other family member (Wright and Seymour 2000; Social Exclusion Unit 2002; McEvoy et al. 1999). Hames and Pedreira equate the reactions of children with imprisoned parents to those whose parents have died: "Too frequently these children, like children whose parents have died, are disenfranchised grievers coping with compounded losses" (2003: 377). Risks for adolescents include taking on a parenting role, delinquency, and limit-testing (Grimshaw and King 2002).

Visits

2.8 Research into young people's experiences with the imprisonment of a family member (Brown 2001) found that, for most young people, the only support and information they receive about the imprisonment is from their mother. Many parents choose not to tell children about the imprisonment of a family member, especially prior to sentence (McEvoy et al. 1999). Part of the problem when parents do not tell their children about the imprisonment of a loved one is that children often realise it themselves or hear about the imprisonment from another source before they have the opportunity to understand about it or to ask questions. Parents and carers often try to shelter children from the truth about a family member's whereabouts, but if the matter is reported in the press, the chances are very good that someone will mention it to the child (Shaw 1987). In an edition of *Prisons Video Magazine* (September 2003), an 8-year old girl spoke of her experience in realising she was visiting her father in prison and how she was afraid at first that the officers were going to lock her up and take her away in chains. Search procedures can also be daunting; children may have difficulty understanding why they have to be rubbed down or why they have to remove jackets and shoes.

2.9 Younger children will also not understand why prisoners cannot get up and play with them during visits while other people can:

It's very hard for him on visits though because she's at that age where she's just really found her feet and she wants to run around a lot. She wants Shaun to play catch and chase with her and he's not allowed to move off his seat, it's horrid, Claire gets upset. He's not even allowed to have any of the baby's drawings and things, they have a play area there at the prison but he's not allowed to go and see what she's doing there, she does her little paintings for him and he can't take them from her. We always bring them home and post them to him, but to her it must be like her Daddy doesn't want her drawings. It's horrid. (21-year old partner of prisoner, daughter 18 months, cited in Katz 2002: 47)

Visitors to a prison in Virginia expressed concern about the effect lack of physical contact had on their children during 'no contact' visits (equivalent to closed visits in the UK; Arditti 2003). Visits can also be extremely dull for children and young people: parents may need time to talk alone, but any activities available tend to be aimed at very young children, and visitors are not allowed to bring anything with them into visits (Action for Prisoners' Families 2003c).

2.10 Changes in the visits procedure can be equally upsetting. If a prisoner is finally entitled to day release or home leave, for example, a child may not understand why a family member has to return to prison. Children may grow to resent imprisoned family members for having caused so many problems or for failing to live up to their expectations (Stewart 2003).

2.11 Overall, children affected by the imprisonment of a family member need good care, emotional support, contact with parents in prison, and an explanation of the imprisonment (Grimshaw and King 2002).

Impact on families

2.12 Families are punished through incarceration even though they are not the ones who have been accused or sentenced (see for example Families Outside 2003). They "experience restricted rights, diminished resources, social marginalization, and other consequences of penal

confinement, even though they are legally innocent and reside outside the prison's boundaries" (Comfort 2003: 77). Interviews with female visitors to men in San Quentin prison in California suggested that women experience a form of 'secondary prisonization' through their sustained contact with the prison (*ibid.*).² Research in France notes that partners as well as children can experience feelings of isolation, loss, and fear of abandonment (Bouregba 1992; Blanco 1992). Prisoners' families are under stress, particularly if imprisonment follows a violent arrest witnessed by the children (Minter 1995; see also McEvoy et al. 1999).

2.13 The Social Exclusion Unit in England noted numerous emotional, practical, and financial difficulties for prisoners' families. The report cited one survey in which three-quarters of partners and mothers attributed health problems directly to the imprisonment of a family member. Sixty per cent of families said the imprisonment of a family member made them "less well off", and families showed an increase dependence on state benefits for income. The family takes on the characteristics of single parent families, with a likely increase in poverty, unemployment, and isolation (Phillips 1985). The remaining parent may not be able to cope alone, such as if he or she was not originally the primary carer or if the parent is left to cope alone with a seriously ill or disabled child - the incidence of which Shaw described in his research as "alarmingly high" (1987: 72).

2.14 Reduced income, the need to explain things to children, and the educational and behavioural problems that may result in children places additional strain on partners of prisoners (Seymour and Hairston 1998). Respondents to Grimshaw and King's (2002) research into prisoners' families cited problems such as budgeting, depression, state benefits, and separation as some of the most difficult aspects of a family member's imprisonment. During research in Northern Ireland, 84% of prisoners' partners said they were having difficulty coping while their partner was imprisoned (McEvoy et al. 1999). About half mentioned finance as the main reason for this, followed by concerns about children (31%), depression (31%), and health (13%; see also Davis 1992; Richards et al. 1994). Women who are imprisoned may be also carers of other family members besides children (National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1993). Arranging for the care of other dependents adds strain to an already difficult situation, just as arrangements

² 'Prisonization' is a term coined by Gresham Sykes (1958) to describe the stages of adaptation and various 'pains of imprisonment' prisoners experience as part of life in custody.

for the care of children do. Psychological support can therefore be an important part of the range of services offered to parents and partners to help them feel more confident and in control (Tudball 2000).

2.15 Even very short periods of custody can put strain on family life (National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994). Light (1995) commented that the impact of imprisonment on a family begins at arrest. Reasons for difficulty in coping tended to be similar whether the partner was on remand or sentenced – indeed, visits for remand prisoners are shorter than for convicted prisoners, though distance and travelling time for the family remains the same (Shaw 1987). Children too can react badly even after very short periods of separation (Wolfe 1999). Much of the damage may be caused by the arrest and imprisonment itself, regardless of the length of time in custody. In the case of people in custody for fine default, for example, Shaw explains that:

... the disruption which this can cause the family is out of all proportion to the length of sentence. This is especially the case when a mother, encouraged by the fact that her husband will soon be released, lies about his whereabouts to her children who subsequently discovers the truth from other sources. (1987: 19)

Fine default in itself can produce family conflict, such as when a partner goes to the effort to pay the fine when the prisoner would rather just serve the time in custody, or conversely when the prisoner puts pressure on the family to pay the fine when they have no money to do so (*ibid.*).

2.16 Caddle and White (1994) found that 40% of married or cohabiting women in their survey reported problems in relationships with their partner while on remand. Despite this, the proportion who mentioned difficulties in relationships was larger if their partners were sentenced (McEvoy et al. 1999). Not surprisingly, relations between partners often break down when one is in custody; emotional, practical, financial, and physical crises are likely to undermine relations between prisoners and their families (Light 1989). Jealousy and suspicion from partners can be another side effect of incarceration (Katz 2002). Research into female offenders found that a quarter to a third of relationships break down during a prison sentence (Morris et al. 1995; Wilkinson 1988).

Maintaining contact

2.17 A report by the Home Office's Social Exclusion Unit (2002) noted that 43% of sentenced prisoners and 48% of remand prisoners lost contact with their families since entering prison. A number of barriers hindered contact. For example, average figures for distance from home in England and Wales were 56 miles for sentenced prisoners generally, 66 miles for women, and 61 miles for Young Offenders, with round trips taking at least five hours. In 2002, over 11,000 prisoners in England and Wales were held in prisons more than 100 miles from home (Katz 2003). Respondents to a transport survey in Scotland (Families Outside 2003) found that 40% of prisoners' families spent between five and twelve hours to make the entire journey (including the visit) to a prison for a visit. For almost a fifth (18%), this took more than twelve hours. For just over a fifth (21%), travel costs for a single visit were £30 or more. Over a third of those who used public transport had to use more than two means of transport to reach the prison. Distance to the prison clearly acts as a barrier to visits: research in Northern Ireland, for example, found that fairly serious inhibitory factors such as instability of a prison regime appeared to have little impact on visiting, but distance and transport had a measurable impact on the number of visits families made, especially for families travelling with children (McEvoy et al. 1999).

2.18 The Prison Reform Trust reported that 62% of prisoners in England and Wales who were not receiving visits said that someone would probably visit if travelling to the prison were easier (Farrant 2001). The cost of transport to visits may result in the loss of direct contact, while "the cost in terms of time and finance may impose further strains at a time of personal stress" (Families Outside 2003: 5). Visiting times may also be inconvenient for families who work or for children in school: evening visits may not be an option, with the result that weekend visits tend to be oversubscribed (see for example Action for Prisoners' Families 2003c). Even where later visits are an option, long travelling times may preclude this as a practical option.

2.19 The cost of transport and distance to the prison affect the whole family. However, a number of barriers act against a prisoner's contact with children in particular. Children may choose to discontinue contact as they grow older and more independent. However children may have little control over this decision if, for example, their carer disapproves of the child visiting the prison, if the carer is unable or unwilling to make the journey, or if indeed the prisoner disapproves of the conditions in which he or she would have to see the children (Buist 1997).

2.20 Contact when both partners are in prison can be even more difficult (Wolfe 1999). Telephone contact between them is highly unlikely, as prisoners cannot receive incoming calls. Prisoners have one letter a week paid for them, so if funds are limited they will have to choose between contacting their partner and contacting their children. Inter-prison visits are possible, but these may count as ‘accumulated visits’, meaning prisoners have to ‘save up’ their visits for six months to be eligible.

2.21 Gabel and Johnston conducted a systematic review of the effects of imprisonment on families (1995). Grimshaw and King (2002; also Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002) summarise these effects as stigma and fear of disclosure; deterioration of health; maternal depression; reduction of income; increased demands from the imprisoned partner such as material help or more problematic requests such as drug supply; and strains on the quality of care to children. In living the life in effect of a single parent and spending all free time in travel and visits to prison, partners of prisoners in Denmark described their own lives as “‘living in a prison without bars’” (Christiensen 2001: 85). In addition to this range of emotions, families of drug-dependent offenders also report feeling relieved that the prisoner may be safer and more ‘stable’ in custody (Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). As yet little is known about the long-term effects of imprisonment on families (Seymour and Hairston 1998).

3. KEY PRESSURE POINTS

3.1 A survey of carers and of prisoners’ families and friends in England and Wales (Grimshaw and King 2002) cited a number of issues for parenting with a partner in prison. The top four issues were stress and coping alone; financial difficulties; education (for the family, the prisoner, and for the children); and communication (in particular explaining the imprisonment to the children and to others and in dealing with the reactions of others). Main issues for families in general were emotional problems such as stigma and stress; financial problems; prison visiting including difficulties with childcare and transportation; and social exclusion. This section looks at these issues at various stages of imprisonment.

Initial incarceration

3.2 Imprisonment, even if arrest is anticipated, is usually a sudden event. Before imprisonment, families are not likely to have had an opportunity to discuss issues such as childcare, housing, or income with the prisoner (Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). If the primary carer is taken into custody, urgent arrangements must be made for childcare, regardless of whether the person is in custody for a day, a week, or for years. Shaw (1987) cited a case in which a single father was arrested, leaving a five-year old boy alone in the house for over ten hours before anyone acted upon the father's requests for intervention (in this case neighbours fortunately realised fairly quickly that the child had been left alone and took him in). This is more commonly a problem for women who enter custody, as they are usually the primary carers of children or other dependents. One study in England found that about half of women who had children living with them prior to remand in custody had difficulty making arrangements for care (Caddle and White 1994), and in 40% of cases such arrangements were eventually made by someone other than the mother (Caddle and Crisp 1997).

3.3 According to interviews with children and young people, the first days and weeks after the arrest is the worst period for them (Christiensen 2001), not least because of the sudden change of circumstances, a sense of powerlessness, lack of information, and possible uncertainty in care arrangements. Support for children *from the point of arrest* needs specific attention (Wolleswinkel 2002).

Ongoing issues

Access to information

3.4 Visitors arrive at prison with a vast array of queries (Loucks 2002). The cost of travel and difficulty in obtaining forms for financial assistance are common frustrations. Lack of information about visits and visiting procedures, inconvenient visiting times and booking systems, perceptions of staff attitudes, the prison environment, and drug detection procedures act as disincentives to prison visits. Queries to Visitors' Centres about booking visits (Loucks 2002; see also Social Exclusion Unit 2002 and HMCIP 2001) related almost entirely to problems getting through on booking lines, difficulty ringing when the lines were open (such as for visitors who work), the expense of calls which may last a long time before a visit can be booked (HMCIP 1997), and the difficulty with space available for visits at weekend. Visitors' Centre

managers noted visitors' fears about searching procedures and drug dogs; in one case a manager found that an elderly gentleman on crutches and his daughter were afraid to sit in the seats at the Centre for fear of drug 'contamination' and subsequent indication from the drug dog (Loucks 2002: 4.21).

3.5 Prisoners' welfare was a particular concern for families when the prisoner had mental health problems or appeared distressed (see also Brown 2001, regarding concerns from young people who visit relatives in prison). Indeed, research into mental health of prisoners on behalf of the Office for National Statistics (Singleton et al. 1998) showed that problems ranging from personality disorders, neurotic symptoms, self-harm, and addiction affect a substantial proportion of people in custody. Access to information about a prisoner's welfare can be extremely difficult for families, especially as families are unable to contact prisoners directly by telephone. Prisons in Scotland have the benefit of Family Contact Development Officers (discussed in more detail below), but these officers may not be in a position to inform families directly about an individual prisoner's welfare.

3.6 The survey of carers and of prisoners' families and friends in England and Wales (Grimshaw and King 2002) noted that information on preparation for release and on how to explain a family member's imprisonment to children, other family members, and schools were important priorities. Talking to children was particularly difficult, especially about topics such as why the person is in prison, where they are, information about the offence itself, why daddy can't put them to bed or why they can't see mum every day, why daddy isn't allowed to see them (in the case of sex offenders), why prisons have different rules, and why daddy has to sit all the time during visits. Issues difficult to explain to others included why the person was in prison and for how long, where their partner is, the arrest and offence, how to tell others and maintain relationships outside, prison rules and procedures, booking visits, personal feelings, bad press, and release from custody. Respondents wanted information available in books, leaflets, video or audio tapes, and on the internet. In rank order, family members were most likely to get their information from Prison Visitors' Centres, local family support groups, probation offices, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, solicitors, courts, GPs, the Prisoners' Families and Friends Service, and schools.

3.7 Needs carers identified for themselves were for support generally, education (parenting skills both in and out of prison and formal education or training), ‘time out’ (i.e. through respite care, childminding, relaxation, and breaks for the children), and having someone to talk to (Grimshaw and King 2002). They wanted information on support services such as welfare, advocacy, Parentline Plus, Home Start, and Childline. They also wanted advice on benefits, budgeting, depression, drugs, domestic violence, child development, and playing with children. Research in Australia (VACRO 2000) identified the opportunity to speak with an independent person who understood the prison system as the most frequent need for support. VACRO also said families considered support for them at home to be important.

Visits

3.8 Visitors often face many difficulties to visit people in custody - long distances, short visits, expense, an unfamiliar and daunting environment, stigma, indignity and bureaucracy - and are likely to receive little encouragement to visit (Loucks 2002; European Action Research Committee 1996). Booking visits can be extremely difficult due for example to the hours telephone booking lines are open or because booking lines are frequently engaged (Loucks 2002; *Hansard* 2002). Distance from home is a common concern for both for visitors and for linking prisoners to local resources and supports upon release (see ‘Maintaining contact’ above and, for example, HMIPP 2001 and Social Exclusion Unit 2002). Visitors may be turned away if they are late or do not have the required identification, “an event creating anger and depression with consequent strife between [visiting family members]” (Shaw 1987: 23). Only about half of all prisoners use their minimum statutory entitlement of two visits per month (HMIPP 2001), and one survey found that almost half of prisoners had lost contact with their families since entering prison (NACRO 2000b).³

3.9 Travelling to visits was the most commonly mentioned difficulty for prisoners’ families in Grimshaw and King’s research (2002). A partner of a prisoner in another study described her feelings this way:

³ Research into family contact in Northern Ireland (McEvoy et al. 1999) found that letters tended to complement visits rather than replace them; visitors who visited frequently also wrote frequently, while those who failed to visit regularly did not seem to make up for it by writing more often.

We are the silent victims. I am not saying it's been easy inside, but it's hard out here. When I visit, I go through all kinds of emotions; I'm knackered, elated, frightened about the long journeys on my own. I am emotionally drained. (partner of prisoner, cited in Katz 2002: 38)

Some parents or carers may find they have to appear strong and happy for the benefit of children: if they get upset themselves, the children will get upset (*Prisons Video Magazine* 2003). Brown's research into young people with a relative in prison found that young people were often acutely aware of this. In her work, she noted that one of the biggest concerns amongst young people was that "their mums needed support themselves and couldn't necessarily offer support to them if they were themselves upset and distressed" (2001: 23).

3.10 Children too show signs of stress surrounding visits. Research in Northern Ireland (NIACRO 1994) reported that many children showed atypical behaviour both before and after visits. This included sickness, irritability, and excessive quietness or over-excitement prior to visits, restlessness and argumentative behaviour during visits, and sadness or withdrawn behaviour afterwards. Later research there confirmed these findings: McEvoy and colleagues (1999: 183) found that the period before visits "appeared to be a time of considerable anxiety" for the whole family, manifesting itself in a range of physical and emotional symptoms. Staff in Visitors' Centres regularly commented upon the obvious stress and nervousness of visitors, especially for those attending visits for the first time (Loucks 2002).

3.11 Visits themselves brought a range of both positive and negative emotions (happiness, comfort, relief, excitement, as well as tension, irritation, frustration, sadness, distress). The proximity of prison staff and lack of privacy,⁴ the possibility of a random strip search for the prisoner, fatigue from travel for families, and possible pressure on prisoners from others to have family members smuggle in contraband can add up to a very tense situation for all concerned (Wozniak and McAllister 1994; McEvoy et al. 1999). Visitors often felt pressure to withhold information about domestic problems or difficulty with children in order "not to spoil the visit" (McEvoy et al. 1999: 183). Visits may be cut off in the middle of conversations or mid-dispute

⁴ Arguably lack of privacy during visits is even more of a concern than being searched (Christensen 2001).

with no resolution (Shaw 1987). Some families reported more positive feelings, but for many emotions tended to trough in the period after visits as well (McEvoy et al. 1999).

3.12 The stress surrounding visits even prior to visitors' arrival means that sensitivity from prison staff in their 'policing' role is paramount, i.e. for checking identification and conducting searches (Loucks 2002). Perceived (and actual) harsh and disrespectful treatment from prison staff adds to the strain on visitors (i.e. Arditti 2003). Visitors' initial experience of visits doubtless influences their perceptions of what to expect in future and of prisons in general. This is perhaps especially true for children, as Buist described in her study in Scotland:

The fact that most children in the study visited at every opportunity combined with the fact that many of their parents showed some familiarity with regimes in other jails, suggests that prison visiting is likely to be a significant feature in the lives of many of them. Their beliefs and values are likely to be influenced by the experience. They certainly absorbed the details of prison life and sustained views of the conditions in which prisoners were held. Therefore it is essential that the experience is a positive one; in effect that each and every visit is a good visit. (1997: 51)

Negative experiences may serve to make children contemptuous of law enforcement, seeing their relative in prison as a victim or hero (Butterfield 1999).

3.13 Children get bored during visits, which both prisoners and carers have identified as one of the most difficult aspects of prison visiting (VACRO 2000; McEvoy et al. 1999). Lack of access to play equipment or to an outdoor area, lack of privacy, lack of opportunities for prisoners to spend time alone with children, a tense atmosphere, restrictions on the movement of prisoners, and long waiting periods for visits are other common concerns.

3.14 Research in prisons in California found a lack of understanding of visitors' needs from the prisoners themselves: "...inmates [were] not always sensitive to the demands which visiting places upon their relatives..." (Neto and Wilson 1982: 44). Research into drug-dependent prisoners in Europe found a similar pattern: prisoners acknowledged their families' material

needs to some extent but seemed to have little concept of the emotional impact of their incarceration on those outside (Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). Hennebel and colleagues found that female prisoners in their research seemed to be more aware of their families' needs and to be more self-reliant than male prisoners. However, Shaw comments that "one point stands out clearly: it is not possible to identify a family's needs from what a prisoner chooses to tell a member of prison staff" (1987: 32).

3.15 Buist (1997) named a number of elements central to good quality visits. These include:

- The authorities' view of family contact;
- Relationships with prison staff;
- Security restrictions;
- The frequency and duration of visits;
- The waiting time prior to visits;
- Amount of physical contact allowed between parents and children;
- Play facilities; and
- Snacks and refreshments.

She sums up good visits as those in which:

- Visitors do not experience any bureaucratic upsets entering the prison;
- Visitors enter the visit room on time or, if delayed, receive assurance that they will get their allotted time;
- The topic of conversation during the visit centres around the outside world of family and friends and avoids negative aspects of the establishment;
- There are opportunities to be close to one another;
- There is a perception of having sufficient time;
- The adults do not have to choose between attending to the children and having a conversation; and
- The security arrangements are unobtrusive, and there are no major security upsets. (Buist 1997: 58)

According to Buist, Family Support staff such as FCDOs (discussed below) have a key role in enabling good quality visits.

Transfer of prisoners

3.16 One interesting dilemma highlighted in research in the United States is the impact of prison privatisation on prisoners' family ties. The authors note that for-profit correctional companies achieve maximum efficiency and therefore more profit in keeping prison beds full; these companies are therefore more likely than public agencies to transfer prisoners between jurisdictions in order to fill the spaces available, with or without the agreement or knowledge of government authorities (Shichor and Sechrest 2002). With the likely greater geographical distances between private sector establishments, such decisions for transfer can have tremendous implications for family contact. Privatisation is not a substantive issue in Scottish prisons at present, but the introduction of private sector prisons and indeed the pressure on space even in public sector establishments means interjurisdictional transfer is an issue which should be monitored. The Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales (1997) recommended that all transfers should be managed so that visitors (not to mention social workers or solicitors) who have booked a visit at the transferring prison can be notified in time – at the prison's expense - to avoid unnecessary journeys.

Release and resettlement

3.17 As noted above, a common request from prisoners' families was for preparation for a prisoner's release (Grimshaw and King 2002). Families are rarely included in a prisoner's preparation for release from custody and tend to be viewed as "a necessary nuisance rather than a positive resource" (APF 2003d: 7). This failure to engage families completely contradicts the principles established in the Children's Hearings System in Scotland in which children and their families work together to find effective remedies for the young person's misbehaviour (NCH Scotland Inquiry Panel 2004). Instead of being a collaborative process, the return of prisoners to their families after a long period of incarceration has been likened to the experiences of war veterans upon their return home, with complex experiences of loss, psychological change, and difficulty in adjusting (Grounds and Jamieson 2003). Simple activities appear daunting, and their mental image of life outside is out of date (Stewart 2003). Many prisoners and families will build up expectations for what life will be like upon a prisoner's return, though in reality the home they left is likely to have undergone major changes in the family's attempt to adjust to life in their absence (Gabel and Johnston 1995; Nurse 2002). Children are likely to find the

readjustment particularly stressful (NEPACS 1997). Gabel and Johnston (1995) argue that services to promote family reintegration and resettlement are essential, such as through mentoring and advocacy in education, employment, and mental health.

3.18 Research with families of drug-dependent prisoners identified release as a particularly stressful and frightening period (Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). Prisoners face pressure from family and fear of relapse while families feel equally anxious. Little support is perceived to be available to prisoners at this stage, however, and prisoners may fall through the gap between support structures in prison and those outside. Prisoners, families, and support services in the research by Hennebel and colleagues believed release was a weak point in service provision and should be subject to more meaningful and concrete planning.

3.19 Interestingly, some research into prisoners' families suggests that worries about release are less to do with reoffending than about issues such as harassment from police or state agencies such as Benefits agencies, the likely difficulty in finding employment, financial problems, and – particularly for prisoners finishing a sentence - learning to live together again as a couple, sexual anxieties, and worries about relationships with children (McEvoy et al. 1999). Their sample was made up of families of political prisoners, which may explain worries about harassment, though targeting of known offenders by the police is a real concern for any ex-prisoner. Differences between sentenced and remand prisoners are likely to be a by-product of the different lengths of separation. McEvoy and colleagues note that such concerns emphasise the need for support for prisoners and their families at the pre-release stage, especially for sentenced prisoners.

Conclusions

3.20 Top priorities for partners of prisoners are material assistance, support, and advice throughout the period of imprisonment, regardless of its duration (Grimshaw and King 2002). Health professionals, teachers, family service workers, and housing professionals also need the information with which to provide this support.⁵ The next section looks at resources currently available in Scotland and elsewhere that provide support for prisoners' families.

⁵ Grimshaw and King's report discusses fully the types of information needed by professionals working in the field and how this can be improved. This is however beyond the remit of the current review.

4. EXISTING RESOURCES

Information and support for families

Organisations – Scotland⁶

4.1 Some organisations offer information and support to families and friends of people in custody. In Scotland, **Families Outside** is the only organisation that works exclusively on behalf of children, parents, spouses, partners, and other family members of people in custody. Corporate membership of the organisation includes key voluntary and statutory agencies in the criminal justice and children and families field in Scotland. Families Outside believes that families affected by imprisonment, especially children, should not have fewer opportunities or face greater barriers to reaching their full potential, and its underpinning principles emphasise the rights of families to supports and services which empower and promote their inclusion in society. It also recognises and promotes the role families can play in supporting their relative during a period of custody and on release and their contribution to reducing reoffending. Its main activities include the following:

- Provides a free confidential national Helpline available to anyone who has a family member or friend in custody in Scotland that enables and empowers by offering information, support and a signposting service. A joint protocol has been agreed with the Scottish Prison Service for action when a caller expresses concern for the health and safety of their relative in prison;
- Produces information for family members and policy makers with current developments including a website, regular briefings for policy makers and service planners, and information booklets for families relevant to Scottish circumstances;
- Undertakes research independently and in collaboration with others on the needs of family members, most recently *Teenagers with a Family Member in Prison* (McCulloch and Morrison 2001) and the *Transport Survey: A Review of Services for Families Accessing Scottish Prisons* (2003) and works collaboratively with the bodies such as the Scottish Police and the Scottish Prison Service to implement recommendations;
- Influences development of policy and strategy through membership of strategic level groups, such as the SPS National Suicide Risk Management Group, and proactively raises issues of concern to families with the relevant bodies; and

⁶ Contact details for these and other UK organisations mentioned in this report are listed in Annex 4. UK Helplines are listed at Annex 3.

- Implements, supports, and participates in innovative pilot activity, such as Family Group Conferencing.

4.2 Other organisations that provide services specifically for prisoners' families in Scotland include the following:

- **HOPE**, a voluntary organisation which has been responsible for prison visitors' centres and offers advice and counselling to ex-offenders and their family members;
- **Kids VIP** (Kids Visiting in Prisons), a charity which operates throughout the UK and specialises in sustaining relationships between children and their imprisoned parents by providing specialised training to prison staff, play workers, and others and by supporting play coordinators, play workers, and volunteers;
- **Mothers' Union**, a church-based organisation that offers voluntary services throughout the UK including supervised play areas in several Scottish prisons;
- **Prison Fellowship Scotland**, which supports the work of churches and chaplains in serving the needs of prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families;
- **SACRO** (Safeguarding Communities, Reducing Offending), which works in a variety of areas of criminal justice including the provision of support for families and transport to prisons for visits;
- **Salvation Army**, which provides support to prison chaplains, provides some assistance with transport for families, and now runs the Prison Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh;
- **Toybox**, which offers voluntary play provision to children in visiting areas in several Scottish prisons.

4.3 Smaller independent organisations offer support within individual establishments, such as the play provision provided by National Children's Homes (NCH) in the visits area at HMP Shotts (Family Contact and Development Team 2000). More recently the Highland Council Addictions Service at HMP Inverness has started using the 'Incredible Years' parenting programme with prisoners and their families (Philbrick 2003). The whole family is involved in this programme: children are provided with activities while parents participate in group work sessions, then the family reunites for visits so parents can experiment with what they have learned.

4.4 Each prison in the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has at least one designated Family Contact Development Officer (**FCDO**), discussed in ‘Family Support Staff’ below. The SPS has also created the post of National Social and Family Care Manager. This post is designed to coordinate and facilitate work with prisoners’ families throughout Scotland, ensuring support and training for FCDOs in the prisons and to develop the role families can play in the resettlement of offenders in the community. The intention is for families to be included in the management of offenders much more generally as part of a wider agenda for social inclusion, as outlined in the SPS report, *Making a Difference* (2002; see also The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service 2000). Unfortunately the post of National Social and Family Care Manager has been empty for most of its existence due to the post-holder’s long-term sick leave.

4.5 The **Assisted Prison Visits Scheme** (APVS) provides financial assistance to qualifying families in the UK travelling to prisons for visits. In theory application forms and information on the Scheme is readily available in all prisons and Young Offender Institutions in the UK. However, some concern is evident about the organisation of the Scheme, and many families may be unaware of their eligibility for assistance (Families Outside 2003).

4.6 A number of other organisations may be useful in the support of prisoners’ families, even though their remit is less specific. These include:

- **Alateen and Alanon**, for teenagers and other family members affected by someone else’s drinking;
- **Barnardo’s**, which works with children in difficult circumstances or otherwise at risk of social exclusion;
- **Children in Scotland**, a national lobbying agency which works to promote the interests of children and their families;
- **Gingerbread Young Lone Parents Project**, which runs a Family Support Project and assists lone parents and low income families in widening their opportunities through work or training;
- **NCH Action for Children**, a UK-wide charity that works with children and families;
- **New Deal**, a UK –wide government initiative to assist single parents in moving from welfare to work;

- **One Parent Families, Scotland**, an organisation for single-parent families that provides a sitter service to give carers short, regular breaks, as well as counselling services, support groups, a pen pal service, training, a newsletter, leaflets, and lobbying. Their work includes a **Lone Fathers Project**, which offers assistance and support to single fathers;
- **Podigt Creations**, a new project that assists children separated from family members in various situations, including imprisonment, through the creation of Memory Badge Packs containing stories and activities to help them recall positive memories; and
- **Save the Children** which, among other areas of interest, promotes the rights of children with parents in prison.

Other organisations for parenting and parenting programmes throughout the UK include the **Trust for the Study of Adolescence** (see McConville 2002), the **National Parenting and Family Institute**, and the **National Childbirth Trust**.

Organisations - Outside Scotland

4.7 Similar support services exist elsewhere. In England and Wales, for example, **Action for Prisoners' Families** (formerly the Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups) acts as the main umbrella organisation, with a remit similar to that of Families Outside in Scotland. It takes an active role in enabling and promoting the work of locally based and national organisations in their support of prisoners' families. APF focuses on improving the support for prisoners' families as soon as someone enters prison; advancing the rights of prisoners' families to privacy; freedom from discrimination and family life as defined in the Children's Act and Human Rights Act; and improving prison visits, family contact, and the involvement of families in resettlement work (see www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk). It also provides a free hotline for prisoners' families. APF has recently published a new series of information booklets based on those published in Northern Ireland in 1994 for prisoners' partners and families (*The Outsiders*, APF 2003; orig. NIACRO 1994), with titles including "Sent to Prison", "Keeping in Touch", "Living with Separation", "Telling the Children", and "Preparing for Release".

4.8 Other national organisations include:

- The **Bourne Trust**, a charity whose aim is to provide aid to prisoners, ex-offenders, and the families of prisoners and ex-offenders;
- The **Howard League for Penal Reform** which, among other activities in the area of criminal justice and prison reform, lobbies for high quality visits for children and frequent access to their parents (Buist 1997);
- **NACRO** (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), which works in a variety of areas of criminal justice including the provision of support for families. NACRO has been active in setting up policy committees and commissioning research, including reports on prisoners' families and the need for increased attention to issues of resettlement (i.e. National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994); and
- The **Prison Reform Trust**, a charity that covers the whole of the UK but is most active in England and Wales. It is a powerful lobbying group active in research primarily in the field of prisons and prisoners but more recently has embraced the fact that families' needs and input should be included in this effort. PRT recently collaborated with Action for Prisoners' Families (then the Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups) in an examination of Prison Visitors' Centres across the UK (Loucks 2002).

4.9 A number of locally based organisations in the UK also provide support:

- **BARS**, a support group for prisoners' wives run through the prison Visitors' Centre at HMP Woodhill;
- **HALOW** (Help and Advice Lone for Offenders' Wives), which provides support for families in the Birmingham area;
- **Norfolk Children with a Parent in Prison Project**, funded by the Norfolk Children's Fund, offers community-based support for children aged 5-13 who have apparent, carer, or close relative in custody;
- **The Ormiston Children and Families Trust** provides services mainly in East Anglia but has become more active nationally in advising policy throughout the UK. The Trust supports disadvantaged children and families generally, but it specifically recognises prisoners' families as part of this remit. Its work has established the Ormiston Trust as a recognised leader in work with prisoners' families, with publications such as *What Shall I Tell the Children?*, *My Mum's in Prison*, and *Visiting Prison with Your Child* setting a model nationally;

- **Parents in Prison** is a project at HMP Holloway through which security-cleared prisoners (for child protection issues) can record a story and make a card for their children, with the assistance of volunteers;
- **Prisoners' Families and Friends Service** provides a telephone help line, has volunteers who attend the Crown Courts in London on Fridays, conducts home visits with families, and runs a London-based weekly drop-in group;
- **Prisoners' Wives and Families Society** operates a help line and drop-in centre, offers overnight accommodation to families visiting London, operates prison Visitors' Centres, and arranges children's visits;
- **Relate** has been piloting Relationship Workshops at HMP Winchester and plans more at other prisons;
- The **Storybook Dad** scheme at HMP Dartmoor uses digital recording of father's stories for their children to allow editing of mistakes, removal of background noise, and the addition of music. Such technology renders the prisoner's reading ability irrelevant, and prisoners have been trained to assist with editing;
- **Time for Families** and the **Exeter Community Family Trust**, at the instigation of Action for Prisoners' Families, have recently started an initiative at HMP Dartmoor called Learning to Live as a Couple Again. This project brings prisoners and their partners together for a one-day course to help prepare them for living together again; and
- Staff members from the **Visitors' Centre at HMP Downview** have also started at Family Pre-Release project in which prisoners obtain a temporary license to attend the Visitors' Centre with their family to discuss family and relationship issues with the assistance of trained counsellors.

4.10 General support services in England and Wales also offer support to prisoners' families:

- **Family Rights Group** works with grandparents who are raising grandchildren due to the parents' inability to provide care. FRG provides information regarding the grandparents' legal rights as carers, as well as educational, financial, and social services matters;
- **Fathers Direct** aims to maximise the positive involvement of fathers and male carers in the lives of vulnerable children;
- The **Frank Buttle Trust** provides grants for children during a serious crisis, usually for day-to-day essentials such as clothing or beds;

- The government's **Home Start** programme offers home visiting in which trained volunteers, supported by paid staff, work with parents who have at least one child under the age of five. They offer friendship, support (such as group work, outings, social events, toy libraries), and practical help in the family's own home;
- **Parentline Plus** operates a free 24-hour helpline to provide information and support for parents. They deliver parenting courses, publish information leaflets, and produce Talking Teens magazine. The magazines address issues such as what to do if your child is arrested and going to court with a child as well as more general information about communication; and
- **Relate** offers support to people generally about relationships including workshops for parents whose relationships have broken down and a telephone line for people wanting immediate help.

4.11 While such organisations provide useful systems of support, no one organisation is responsible for the direct coordination and provision of services to prisoners' families in the UK (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003; Action for Prisoners' Families 2003c; HMIPP 2001). Further, the failure of so many support services to recognise and plan specifically for prisoners' families as part of their remit seems to be a glaring oversight that emphasises yet again the fact that this group is easily overlooked.

4.12 In the last decade, Northern Ireland claimed to have one of the most highly developed system for the provision of services to families in Western Europe (SSI 1993), including Visitors' Centres outside all of the adult prisons and an extensive home leave scheme for prisoners (Gormally and McEvoy 1995). McEvoy et al. note that:

The Northern Ireland Office has been willing to spend money on family-related matters, both to avoid creating family-related problems and as part of a wider strategy to discourage families from relying upon paramilitary support services (Gormally et al. 1993).⁷ A specialist prisoners' families service run jointly by

⁷ Such a strategy included the funding of voluntary organisations such as NIACRO, the Quakers, Save the Children Fund and others to provide a range of services to prisoners' families.

NIACRO and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland also exists and there are a range of services provided by paramilitary prisoners' welfare groups. (1999: 178)

A partnership between the Probation Board and NIACRO called **Prison Link** informs families of available services such as transport as soon as a family member is received into custody.⁸ In 2000, the Probation Board, NIACRO, Ulster Quakers, Prison Fellowship, Save the Children Fund, Barnardo's, and the Northern Ireland Prison Service joined together to form the Interagency Children of Prisoners Group, which aims to raise the profile of prisoners' children and to promote more integrated and inclusive approaches to supporting them (Lappin 2003). As part of this work, prisoners' families helped make a short video called "A Child's Journey", which turned out to be a powerful means of raising awareness about the needs of prisoners' children (*ibid.*). Children affected by imprisonment have since been identified specifically as a vulnerable group within the plans of the four Health and Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland.

4.13 Outside the UK, **EUROCHIPS** (European Action Research Committee on Children of Imprisoned Parents) acts as the main umbrella organisation for European associations concerned with prisoners' families. It is currently compiling a handbook on practice and experience in work with prisoners' children and family ties, due for publication in 2004.⁹ In France, the founding member of EUROCHIPS – the **Fédération des Relais Enfants Parents (FREPE)** – works in a number of areas in the assistance of prisoners' families. These include lobbying for the reimbursement of travel costs; the creation of child-friendly play areas in all prison establishments; and the accreditation organisations to accompany children to visit parents in prison. Also in France, a **family ties unit** has been created in the women's maximum security unit at Rennes, consisting of three two-bedroom flats which allow female prisoners to spend up to 72 hours with their partners and/or children. Similar units exist in some prisons in Spain and Canada. Prisons in Denmark and Sweden allow conjugal visits as standard practice, though these are limited to the normal two-hour visit session, and visitors may be strip-searched. In Luxembourg, an organisation called **Service Treff-Punkt** runs community-based groups to facilitate parent-child relationships. They have now extended their work into prisons and offer

⁸ With the prisoner's consent, Prison Link contacts by post the person named as the prisoner's next of kin.

⁹ For information, e-mail contact@eurochips.org or ring (+33)(1) 42 77 85 63.

discussion groups on child-related issues, craft workshops, preparation of children for prison visits, and accompaniment on visits.

4.14 Outside Europe, equivalent organisations offering support and information to families include the **Canadian Families and Corrections Network**, the **New Zealand Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society**, and in Australia, the **Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders** (VACRO). VACRO, for example, offers family liaison services in three of Victoria's prisons. In the United States, the **Families and Corrections Network** fills this role, and the **National Institute of Corrections**, U.S. Department of Justice publishes a directory of programmes for families in the U.S. and Canada (Mustin and Halfacre 1998). Organisations such as the National Fatherhood Initiative Resource Center offer more general support to families, though may include more specific support: the Child Welfare League's web site, for example, includes a page on Children with Incarcerated Parents (www.cwla.org/programs/incarcerated/whathappens.htm). Grimshaw and King also noted that churches in the US appear to play an important role in social networks that may not exist to the same extent elsewhere (2002; see Edenfield 2002).

4.15 Organisations that offer services and information to families provide a wide range of support. These services, listed in detail in Grimshaw and King (2002), offer advice on benefits, relationships, housing, employment, and drugs; waiting areas, refreshments, and play provision/child care for prison visits; information on transport and prison regimes; and activities, training, workshops, and self-help groups.

Leaflets and other sources of information

4.16 A number of leaflets have been designed specifically for families. The Ormiston Trust's leaflets, *What Shall I Tell the Children?* and *My Mum's in Prison*, support parents and carers in their communication with children about imprisonment. A *Children's booklet* published by the New Zealand Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society introduces key issues for caregivers, praised for its "simple language and a positive outlook" (Grimshaw and King 2002: 39). The Canadian Families and Corrections Network also publishes such a guide (Withers, n. d.). A US publication assists caregivers and prisoners in preparing a child for a visit, giving a step-by-step

guide dealing with initial preparation, the day of the visit, and the aftermath (FCN 2002).¹⁰ *Homecoming*, a leaflet from HMP Leyhill in England, is designed to help families prepare for reunification following imprisonment. A personal account of the effects of imprisonment on families and useful supports in the US is detailed in *Family Arrested* (Edenfield 2002). Equally another US publication, *Down Time* (Novak 2002), shares the experience of an ex-prisoner that is of benefit to prisoners (namely in US prisons), lawyers, and families.

4.17 A number of countries have internet sites of relevance to prisoners' families. These include the Tasmanian Prisoner Support Service's Family Information Booklet (Tasmania Department of Justice 2003), the Prison Issues Family Support Directory in the US, and support groups such as the web site for Canadian Federal Inmates and their Families. The Family and Corrections Network has a specific library for children of prisoners and their carers with information sheets that can be downloaded (Adalist-Estrin 2003).

4.18 Other specific information may not be targeted specifically at prisoners' families but address issues common amongst them. For example, *The Parenting Plan* (Lord Chancellor's Department 2002) discusses practical issues for parents who decide to separate or divorce; and *Parents' Guide to Drugs – What You Should Know* (Ives, Ghelani, and Saffron 1999) gives information and advice on drugs, communication strategies, and legal issues while retaining a focus on parenting. The advice in the latter leaflet is entirely non-judgmental and can be complemented by prison-specific information such as *Prisons, Drugs & You* (Whitehouse 1999). Grimshaw and King (2002) included a list of UK publications relevant to prisoners and their families in an appendix of their main report. This list has been attached to this report at Annex 1.

4.19 Finally, information for families is readily available from prison Visitors' Centres, in those prisons that have them, and often from prisons themselves. Many prisons send basic information leaflets to families when posting out Visiting Orders. More specific information, such as about search procedures, can also be available; HMP Albany, for example, has posters of its search procedure up so visitors will know what to expect. Some prisons have introduced induction sessions for families as well. These sessions include a presentation from prison staff,

¹⁰ For other examples of advice to families for visits, see Ormiston Trust (1996), Jordan Institute for Families (2001), Prisoners' Families Support Service (2002), and Centerforce (2003).

Question and Answer sessions, and possibly a slide show, video, or tour of the prison. Examples of these can be found at HMYOI Polmont, HMP Glenochil, and HMP Edinburgh in Scotland and at HMP Magilligan in Northern Ireland.

Information and support for children and adolescents

4.20 In addition to general information for families, the literature internationally shows a clear need for specific provision of information and support for young people with family members in prison. Grimshaw and King (2002) describe children's need for emotional support during the trauma of separation and in coming to terms with imprisonment and its implications (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Le Camus 2002; NEPACS 1997). The general view is that children cope better when they know the truth and receive an adequate explanation (European Action Research Committee on the Children of Imprisoned Parents 1996). Publications such as *No One's Ever Asked Me* in the UK (Brown 2001) show some of the ways young people learn to cope with the imprisonment of a family member, such as the importance of contact with the person in prison and their desire to be kept informed and involved in decisions affecting them. A number of support projects have been developed to help children and young people through social opportunities in the community (Seymour and Hairston 1998; Boswell and Wedge 2002).

4.21 A small number of books have been written specifically for children of imprisoned parents. The UK publication, *Dad's in Prison* (Cain and Speed 1999), is one such effort, though user feedback reported in Grimshaw and King (2002) made a number of criticisms. The US publication, *When Andy's Father Went to Prison* (Hickman and Raymond 1990), attracted more favourable reviews due to more emphasis in the book on feelings rather than facts (Grimshaw and King 2002). Grimshaw and King also mention 'stimulus material' as a means of encouraging children to express feelings that may not come out in day-to-day conversation. An example of this is a publication in the US called *Two in Every Hundred* (Chrisman, n. d.).

4.22 Information aimed directly at teenagers is scarce. Besides *No One's Ever Asked Me*, mentioned above, Action for Prisoners' Families in the UK has also published a leaflet called *Who's Guilty* (2002), aimed at teenagers but with guidance notes for adults working with this age group. A similar publication in Northern Ireland is *Left in Limbo* (Hall 2000). More general information is also available: prior to *The Parenting Plan* (2002), the Lord Chancellor's

Department published three leaflets aimed directly at the children of parents in the midst of separation or divorce, specifically for children of different age groups (5-8 years, 8-13, and 13-18).

4.23 Action for Prisoners' Families (APF) recently reported on two pilot projects for young people with a family member in prison (2003b and 2003c). In one project for adolescents, called *Starting Where They Are*, APF funded specific training on the needs of prisoners' families for employees of the YMCA already working as Pastoral Care Workers in nine schools in Norfolk and Suffolk. The project was developed to raise awareness of the issue in schools while taking advantage of a pre-existing service. This avoids the stigma of a specific 'issue-based' service and preserves confidentiality of users. Support is based in schools, is flexible and provides one-to-one or group support, depending on the needs of participants.

4.24 The second project, the Young People's Support Service, consists of a separate room within the Visitors' Centre at HMP Durham specifically for teenage visitors (though the room was open to all young people from age 7). The room provides age-appropriate activities plus a paid support worker and two volunteers. The room offers a space for young people to await visits, contact with other young people in a similar situation, age-appropriate information, and "a conduit for one-to-one support with the support worker or for family support" (2003b: 7). Basing the project in the Visitors' Centre allows young people to self-refer to the service and enables links to be created with support staff inside the prison. The support worker is also able to assist in requests for escorts for visitors into the prison who are too young to visit on their own. This is especially helpful for older teenage children who lived with relatives who did not wish to visit or who were unable to take time off work to attend (see McCulloch and Morrison 2001: 23).

4.25 In California, the Center for the Children of Incarcerated Parents runs a number of programmes for young people (DeAngelis 2001). Some of this includes long-term assistance for children to help them handle traumas and difficult emotions and behaviours such as anger, depression, and aggression. Children take part in weekly therapy sessions, skill-building, and social activities. The New Hampshire Department of Corrections has also launched a Family Connections Project which serves both male and female prisoner-parents. The programme

includes a mandatory parenting class, followed by voluntary supervised support groups and voluntary supervised meetings between prisoners and their children. For the supervised meetings, team members observe parents and their children from behind a two-way mirror, then afterwards give feedback to the parent. The intervention team continually adjusts the programme to fit the needs of the parents. For example, they designed and taught ‘mini-classes’ on interactive play such as games, drawing, and painting rather than more ‘closed’ activities such as watching videos.

4.26 One programme in Oregon is designed to address needs at the key stages of incarceration. The first step in the programme is to assign an advocate to a child immediately upon a parent’s arrest – “the point at which children are usually lost to the system” (Newton, in DeAngelis 2001: 5). Upon incarceration, all inmates are needs-assessed and identified as parents or not. A team at the prison develops a type of sentence plan that, for parents, includes mandatory parenting classes. Finally, a parenting component is included in the prisoner’s preparations for release.

Information for professionals working with prisoners’ families

4.27 Much of the literature available for prisoners’ families will be of use to people who work with this group as well. However, some publications can be of particular use or are designed specifically for professionals in various fields (Grimshaw and King 2002). The report *Living in the Shadows* (FPPSG 1996), for example, explains how health professionals in various roles can handle referrals and work together to support families. The report is also of benefit to housing professionals, encouraging them to take into account the circumstances of families who may be victimised when their situation is made public. Two reports of use to educational professionals (Ramsden 1998; Dibb 2001a) give guidance on supporting children in school. Child welfare agencies may be on particular need of information. In the US, welfare agencies working with children have little training in this area since the group is such a small proportion of their caseload (Seymour and Hairston 1998), yet foster care placements can result in particular stresses and difficulties for prisoners’ families (Gabel and Johnston 1995). In England and Wales, the restructuring of the probation service has opened a gap in services available to families. Probation officers may be viewed as having less involvement with families now than previously (Ditchfield 1994; NEPACS 1997), leaving families in even more need of support.

4.28 The UK publication, *A Problem Shared* (Blake, Elliott, and Peel 1993), advises practitioners who wish to set up support services for prisoners' families. The report outlines the effects of imprisonment in detail, but also gives "down to earth" advice, "especially on families' practical needs and on the need for clear communication" (Grimshaw and King 2002: 31). Webster (1999) wrote on this subject more recently regarding the functions of support groups and models of good practice. Unfortunately neither publication, as is the case in so much of the literature in this area, readily quantifies 'quality service' or outcomes. Save the Children (1995) cites more basic principles to people or organisations that come into contact with children of prisoners. These principles, endorsed by Families Outside, are reprinted in their report into teenagers with a family member in prison (McCulloch and Morrison 2001).

Facilities for family contact

4.29 Visiting entitlements were boosted following publication of the Woolf Report in 1991. Evidence from the Prison Service to the Woolf Inquiry stated:

The disruption of the inmate's position within the family unit represents one of the most distressing aspects of imprisonment.... Enabling inmates, so far as possible, to stay in close and meaningful contact with the family is therefore an essential part of humane treatment.... There is every reason to believe that the nature of a prisoners' relationship with his or her family will be an important factor in determining whether he or she will succeed in leading a useful and law-abiding life on return to the community. (Woolf and Tumim 1991: 14.223)

Prison Services throughout the UK have made substantial progress towards improving family contact in recent years. About 110 of the 158 prisons in England, Wales, and Scotland have play facilities for at least some of the regular visit sessions (Philbrick 2003). Most new prisons in England and Wales and many existing ones have purpose-built Visitors' Centres. Some prisons have experimented with Family Days, which allow extended visits for prisoners with children and in some circumstances can mean family members seeing inside the prisoner's cell. Many prisons throughout the UK have some provision for separate parent/child visits, often called 'bonding visits'. Criteria for such visits tend to be strict, however, and may not include older

children (such as those aged 12-18 in England and Wales: Action for Prisoners' Families 2003b), short-sentenced prisoners, or visits with family members other than parents such as grandparents or older siblings.

4.30 In Scotland, HMP Shotts has shown some innovation in creating Quality Visits, targeted mainly at close family members. These visits last for a longer period of time than normal visits in a quieter environment due to the smaller numbers of visits taking place at one time. Prisoners on the regular prison regime may exchange a normal visit for a Quality Visit once every three months, while those on the enhanced regime may do so every month. Family photos of the prisoner and his immediate family may be taken at these sessions twice a year so families have up to date photographs of each other. Some prison visits areas are also beginning to accommodate the particular needs of older children, such as in the provision of a separate area for them with age-appropriate activities at HMP Risley and HMP Barlinnie.

4.31 Provision for visits in some countries can be more liberal. Several years ago Correctional Services Canada introduced a system of private family visits (PFVs), in which eligible prisoners may spend up to 72 hours with their families in small chalets within the grounds of the prison every two to three months (see 'Organisations – Outside Scotland' above). Although the scheme originally faced great opposition from prison staff and from the public, the system has become not only an accepted part of prison life but also a valuable 'carrot' for the management of prisoners (HMCIP 1996). As in similar schemes in France and Spain, the length of time means families can spend time together in more 'normal' activities.

4.32 Some innovative work is being done for prisoners' families in France (Le Camus 2002), which includes accompanying children on visits to prisons (a role generally undertaken in the UK only by carers, friends, or social workers) and reconnection of prisoners with children who have lost contact. This latter role exists in the UK only on an informal basis, such as through the work of the Family Support worker at HMYOI Hindley or through the Salvation Army. Some jurisdictions are stricter in limiting the extent of separation of families. Brazilian law, for

example, mandates that prisoners are allowed to serve their sentence in the county where they were sentenced or where their families are based (Act 6416/77; Ottoboni 2000).¹¹

4.33 Mother and Baby units in many women's prisons offer more intensive contact between mothers and their babies. In these units, babies live in the prison with their mothers up to a certain age, depending on the jurisdiction and the space available. While this policy eliminates the need for care arrangements for the babies outside and avoids the forcible separation of mothers and infants, it also raises the question of whether prison is a suitable environment for babies and young children (see Wolleswinkel 2002). The Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT 2000) argues that the governing principle must be the child's welfare. In Italy, mothers with children under the age of three are not imprisoned, but are put under house arrest; those with children under the age of ten follow an alternative work programme outside prison (Biondi 1995).

Family Support staff

4.34 A number of prisons in Scotland have developed the post of Family Contact Development Officer (FCDO), following a recommendation from research into the impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families (Peart and Asquith 1992). The purpose of the FCDO is to assist in the liaison between prisons and prisoners' families, including in some cases induction programmes for visitors and an increased focus on relations between prisoners and their children. The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service support this and advocate ready access to such staff in prisons:

The waiting room is obviously the point at which proactive FCDOs such as there are in [several prisons] can make an immense difference. They are available to provide information and understand families' needs and actively build relationships.... [FCDOs] can also be available for support after a difficult visit or if families have concerns. (2000: 4)

¹¹ Indeed APAC (Association for the Protection and Assistance of the Convicted), a religious-based 'community-style' programme within the prison, puts such an emphasis on family ties that it requires the families of participating prisoners to live within ten miles of the prison; selection for the APAC programme is based both on the prisoner's desire to reform and on the willingness of his family to participate in the programme (see Burnside et al. 2004, forthcoming).

4.35 The role of Family Officer has also been developed in a prison in Northern Ireland, and the Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales has recommended this (HMCIP July 2001; also National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994), though similar posts currently exist in very few Prison Service establishments in England and Wales (see also Social Exclusion Unit 2002). Unusually the Family Support post at HMYOI Hindley is filled by a civilian member of staff from POPs (Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group). The effectiveness of the role of Family Support staff is outlined in ‘What Works’, below.

Gaps in provision

Recognition

4.36 A number of initiatives operate in Scotland and throughout the UK, but equally some areas show gaps in provision of support to prisoners’ families. One of the most obvious gaps, based on the descriptions of organisations above, is how few organisations formally acknowledge prisoners’ families as a distinct group within the remit of their work. Only once the existence of this (very hidden) group is acknowledged and identified can specific work be done to address their needs. Grimshaw and King (2002) comment on the need for better tools for support services, such as case management handbooks containing guidance on difficult issues, as well as directories, regulations, and sample materials (also Seymour and Hairston 1998). They recommend an annual review of key factual publications targeted at families, a regularly maintained national list of help and resources, specific quality standards for future publications,¹² and development of a core website document which can be used as a guide. Grimshaw and King identify specific training of individuals as another gap, which they believe voluntary sector groups can help fill. They cite Save the Children’s training publication for schools as a good example of this type of resource (Ramsden 1998).

4.37 Even with Family Support staff in prisons, a specific ‘voice’ or advocate for children is virtually non-existent, with the notable exception of the Young Person’s Project at HMP Durham. Staff in Visitors’ Centres can do this to a certain extent, but this largely depends on the quality of the Centre’s relationship with the prison. Their ability to advocate for every individual in need may also be limited by the resources available (Loucks 2002). The Women’s Policy

¹² Appendix C of their report contains a guide for assessment of the quality of resources.

Group in England and Wales recommended the appointment of a ‘guardian’ for all babies in prison to ensure they had a ‘voice’; this recommendation has yet to proceed (Joseph 2003).

Early provision of information

4.38 The need for information in courts, prior to imprisonment, is an obvious gap in information for families:

The need for support throughout the remand period is clear, but there are immediate needs at court, particularly for families inexperienced in the criminal justice system. They need to know the basic facts about which prison someone is likely to have been sent to, how to arrange a visit and how to get there: facts which the court has no duty to provide. (Penny 2002)

At the time of her research into the work of Family Support staff, Loucks (2004, forthcoming) found that only two prisons (one in Scotland and one in England) provided information in the courts about family support. In a meeting of Families Outside in April 2002, staff in the Scottish prison said they had tried to put leaflets in the local court, but were denied permission. They were able to provide leaflets in other locations such as libraries, job centres, and solicitors offices. Other prisons such as HMP Edinburgh have since started supplying information to families in the courts. In some jurisdictions organisations such as the Prisoners’ Families and Friends Service or Partners and Families of Prisoners (POPs) may be available to provide some information, but such services are not universally available. Family Support staff are well-placed to provide information about their prison and visits to the relevant courts and, indeed, at ‘feeder’ prisons.

Preparation for release

4.39 Research in the United States shows that rising prison populations and the consequent pressure on space in prisons mean that larger proportions of prisoners leave custody with little preparation and with less connection to community-based social structures (Travis and Petersilia 2001). The authors noted a need for more systematic reintegration, including better linkages with family and child welfare policies. Without a doubt such linkages need development in Scotland as well. An example of this is that little formal liaison or consultation takes place for

strategic planning between local authority Criminal Justice Social Work Throughcare teams and the prison Throughcare services in their area, nor does any formal requirement to do so exist. The only consultation required between these groups at all is annual contact (minimum) to discuss prisoners sentenced to four years or more and those serving extended sentences. Such linkages need to start with a formal recognition of the rights of prisoners' families.

4.40 Preparation for release through pre-releases courses and counselling, both for prisoners and their families, could be a very beneficial service. In an article for the Prison Reform Trust, one prisoner made these comments:

...my marriage survived the sentence, but not the release. When I returned home it soon became evident that things had changed. Instead of my wife and children relying on me for everything, they had become independent, self-sufficient. They had learnt to live without me. I felt surplus to needs.... Perhaps we should concentrate more on the emotional challenges of release, and not just the material things. (Seward 2002: 24)

Prior to release, many prisoners are transferred to 'open' establishments. Staff members in some prisons argue that Family Support staff are less important in open establishments, where prisoners have much greater contact with their families (Loucks 2004, forthcoming). However, the prisoner cited above had spent the last three years of his sentence in an open prison. Other officers in the research into Family Support staff (*ibid.*) contradicted their colleagues, saying that family support work is at least as important, if not a priority, in open establishments.

Appropriate targeting

4.41 Grimshaw and King explain that for information to be of sufficient quality, it needs to be aimed at the target audience: information for families should clarify what action families need to take (see for example the leaflet "10 ways to be a better Dad" published by the National Fatherhood Initiative in the U. S., and the Securicor leaflet for families on electronic tagging). In terms of resources for children and families, Grimshaw and King suggest that material for children in which a girl is the main character would be helpful. Family members such as

grandparents may also be in need of information and support, though they are easily overlooked (Gabel and Johnston 1995).¹³

4.42 Grimshaw and King also note a lack of information about resilience and change in families: “We know a good deal about risks and adverse outcomes but less about who is most vulnerable to stress and who is unlikely without help to overcome its effects and ensuing disadvantages” (2002: 28). They comment this is particularly true regarding information on race equality and imprisonment.

Further development of existing resources

4.43 In a number of cases, the need is not so much to fill gaps as to strengthen the resources that are, albeit to a limited degree, already available. In their review of services internationally, for example, Grimshaw and King (2002) indicated that a number of useful resources on visiting prisons and on schools were available, but that much more could be done. Publications for children could also usefully include readers’ guides for carers and parents to encourage dialogue between them. They also said that while existing resources have merit, these should be continually reviewed and updated. A range of materials to address emotional and relational issues exists, but few are in a form suitable for the audiences that need them most.

4.44 About half the respondents in Grimshaw and King’s research had plans to develop the support they offered to prisoners’ families. Plans included support groups, parenting programmes, health care surgeries in Visitors’ Centres, more consultation with families, trained volunteers for family support, assistance with rebuilding relationships as part of a prison’s pre-release scheme, and improved play provision. Newer initiatives included a book about how to be a good father in prison (which has subsequently been published; *Inmates and Families at HMP Wolds* 2003) and a picture book to show prison life to children.

4.45 In general Grimshaw and King (2002) found that the particular needs of care-givers and other family members required greater attention, especially information on preparation for release. A need for more information on prisoners’ families for professionals such as those

¹³ Pp. 265-267 of Gabel and Johnston’s report describes a support group for grandparents.

working in education was also evident. The authors further identified scope for development of computer and internet-based resources targeted at children and young people.

4.46 Resources such as prison Visitors' Centres also appear to be underdeveloped. In March 2002 only 63% of prisons for males in England and Wales had a Visitors' Centre, as did only 57% of those for females (*Hansard* 7 March 2002). In Scotland, only three prisons currently have prison Visitors' Centres. A number of prisons have developed induction programmes for prisoners' families (see 'Existing resources', above). However, induction may only be available to families – often limited to adults or even only to partners – of prisoners sentenced to at least a certain period of time or sometimes only to those sentenced for the first time. This means families of prisoners regularly in and out of the system for short periods or any families of prisoners on remand may not be eligible for an induction session. Any scheme that offers information and support to families improves the *status quo*. Certain families could have priority over others where space is limited, but ideally such information should be openly available to anyone who wants it.

Why do some people fail to access existing resources?

4.47 In Northern Ireland, McEvoy and colleagues noted that:

... despite the apparent range of services available to prisoners' families, many of the traditional problems experienced by such families go unmitigated. Further, there appears to be an ironic contradiction for partners of politically motivated prisoners, where an apparently high level of available services is not matched by actual utilization. (1999: 178)

A number of factors may inhibit prisoners' families from accessing the information and support they need. Young people may hesitate to disclose a need for support because of fear of the stigma of having a family member in prison: "Young people are characteristically reluctant to reveal that a close family member is in custody" (Action for Prisoners' Families 2003b: 13). Research into teenagers in prison found this group difficult to access: "These young people can be described as *hard to reach*, and more often than not they have been ignored" (McCulloch and Morrison 2001: 6, emphasis in original). Issue-based provision of support (i.e. support clearly

identified as that for prisoners' families) may increase fear of identification as 'someone with a prisoner in the family' or as a 'criminal' family, with the associated stigma (Action for Prisoners' Families 2003b; McEvoy et al. 1999). Schools may reinforce stigma themselves, intentionally or unintentionally, from fear of being identified as a 'problem' school (Action for Prisoners' Families 2003b). Equally, families labelled as 'problem families' can themselves have difficulty accessing support (Goodman and Adler 2004).

4.48 Feelings of shame and fear of prison can be a strong initial obstacle for the whole family in accessing support (Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). Appropriate information may be difficult to give to groups such as parents unless they identify their needs (Grimshaw and King 2002). Advice that is too general may not be helpful; for parents, for example, every child is different and will respond differently (Henricson 2002). Some parents may fear criticism, and lack of trust acts as a further factor in failures of communication (Dibb 2001b; Griffith 2003). Grimshaw and King explain that this can be a major inhibitor to appropriate provision of support:

It is clear that professional and personal confidentiality are significant issues in blocking a coherent path to service provision. If parents are reluctant to reveal the facts and there are no acceptable and ethical mechanisms for interprofessional or multiagency communication, it is difficult to arrive at solutions based on informed professional judgments. (2002: 28)

4.49 Some families fear that their children may be taken from them if a service they use learns they have a family member in prison (Moore 2003). Grimshaw and King say that families "... should be encouraged to believe they have a say in the use of the information they disclose and they should not feel that information seeking will harm their chances of getting the help they want" (2002: 29). A personal introduction to a resource from a friend or professional may increase the recipient's interest in it (Henricson 2002).

4.50 The availability of information for parents also varies with the age of the child. Henricson's report (*ibid.*) noted that "family support services, including information resources,

are progressively less available to parents as their children mature and enter adolescence” (cited in Action for Prisoners’ Families 2003b: 4).

4.51 Visitors to prisons tend to have a low profile, which in turn creates a perception of lack of demand for further support or services (Loucks 2002). Researchers in California explain that visitors to every prison they studied were unaware of what entitlements they should expect as visitors. Visitors were also often extremely hesitant to ensure any entitlements were respected for fear of negative consequences for the prisoner:

The often-time oppressive environment in which visiting occurs foments not only a type of institutional attitude among staff and inmates but a helpless passivity among the visitors. Visitors are fearful of making complaints because of the possibility of backlash on the inmate or denial of visiting privileges. As a third party, the centers may be in the most advantageous position to bring attention to visitors’ problems. (Neto and Wilson 1982: 56)

4.52 The American research found that visitors do not ‘demand’ services, but lack of ‘demand’ does not equate to lack of need. On the contrary, visitors to prisons are entirely dependent on other people to be a voice for them. Some visitors may simply not make regular use of services available but are nonetheless glad supports are available should they need them (Action for Prisoners’ Families 2003c).

4.53 Further, there is as yet no statutory obligation to provide families with information to help them cope with imprisonment and to prepare for release (Action for Prisoners’ Families 2003c). The National Policy Committee on Resettlement (1994) suggested that the Probation Service take on this responsibility; in their view the Probation Service should, with the prisoner’s consent, keep families informed about sentence planning, throughcare, and plans for release. Families are often left on their own to gather information from police, solicitors, social workers, courts, and prisons (Grimshaw and King 2002; Loucks 2004, forthcoming). Grimshaw and King note that the early stage of imprisonment is a particularly stressful time “precisely because so much is unknown and unfamiliar” (2002: 36). Getting information to families during that time, however, is more difficult:

Clear written information presented in a supportive atmosphere can be reassuring as well as practically useful. How to ensure that families access the information is deeply problematic. A concerted effort to contact families as soon as possible after the imprisonment is vital but pathways to the information are currently unsystematic. (*ibid.*)

4.54 The lack of structure and clear responsibility in the provision of information to families means that many people will be ignorant of what supports are available (Families Outside 2003; Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall 2002). Prison staff may not have up to date information regarding services and may therefore pass on inaccurate or misleading information to families (Families Outside 2003). Financial assistance for visits through the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVS) is one example of this:

There are still too many people who do not know that they may be eligible to apply for an assisted visit or other help. People are very private and often feel ‘I am not the type to go to agencies’.... On the other hand, rules on who may qualify don’t seem to recognise the way many families live today either. (Katz 2002: 40)

The transport survey in Scotland (Families Outside 2003) found that nearly half of families surveyed had not heard of the APV Scheme.

4.55 Eligibility for assistance such as Assisted Prison Visits may be confusing, but leaflets for the APVS are at least published in a number of languages and in Braille (see ‘What Works’ below). Grimshaw and King (2002) suggested that application forms for Assisted Prison Visits include an extended checklist to ensure applicants have provided all the necessary information.

4.56 Financial assistance to carers of prisoners’ children can be another area of uncertainty. The costs of caring for a prisoners’ child often falls to grandparents or other family members. Child Benefit can be made payable to the carer, but only if the carer makes a separate claim. The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) notes that many carers seem unaware of this and as a result may

receive no financial support as they would for example in formal fostering arrangements (nor, indeed, are care arrangements checked by any statutory agency as they would be in fostering or adoption proceedings; Katz 2003).

4.57 Research into prison Visitors' Centres in the UK (Loucks 2002) made a number of recommendations to fill gaps in the support available to visitors. These recommendations included the following:

- raising prisoners' awareness of the effects of imprisonment on the whole family;
- improving the availability of information for prisoners' families in plain English, as well as in different languages, following a local review of which languages may be relevant;
- greater accessibility of information for visitors, including options such as cassette tapes or videos for people with literacy problems or other impairments;
- readily available information on prisoners' daily life, such as through photographs of cells, family induction, and Family Days;
- recognition and development of the role of Visitors' Centres as advocates for prisoners' families;
- recognition of families as a primary source of feedback for prison staff regarding a prisoner's risk of suicidal behaviour, mental health, and other risks; and
- development of opportunities for increased positive, constructive interaction between uniformed staff and visitors.

4.58 In addition to these recommendations, Grimshaw and King (2002) argue that difficulty in the dissemination of information to practitioners restricts the information available to service users. One problem may be gaining access to practitioners at the time the information is needed. The authors suggest creating networks of key contact points so that individual professionals can access these as needed. Further, general efforts at informing families in need and reducing social exclusion should specifically include families of prisoners as a risk group.

4.59 Finally, some families may not access formal resources because they get support informally from family and friends. McEvoy and colleagues (1999; also VACRO 2000) found

this in the majority of cases amongst partners of paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland, though such support does not appear to be universal there (Edgerton 1986; McWilliams 1990; McWilliams and Spence 1996), and assistance from neighbours is likely to depend on the quality and extent of existing relations (Shaw 1987). Other types of support such as helplines give immediate access to information, but they can sometimes be regarded “as resources for the desperate rather than as routine providers of help” (Grimshaw and King 2002: 50). Boswell (2002) suggests that formal support services should become much more integrated with families and their informal supports both during and after sentence to ensure comprehensive assistance when and where families need it.

5. WHAT WORKS?

Reduction of offending

5.1 After their very thorough review of resources available internationally, Grimshaw and King conclude that “Current and concise information is lacking on services that are either promising or demonstrably ‘work’” (2002: 47). Much of the information available discusses the benefits of family contact generally to prisoners and says very little about benefits to the families outside. For example, research now recognises that families can play an important part in helping prisoners through their sentences and in contributing to sentence management and prison regimes. Encouraging family ties has much wider implications than simply ‘being nice’ to families or easing the difficulties of custody for prisoners: earlier research in the United States found that prisoners who were able to maintain good family ties were almost six times less likely to reoffend than those who did not (Holt and Miller 1972; also Hairston 1991). A more recent review of the literature into family ties reported similar benefits (Ditchfield 1994), and research in the former USSR cited severed family ties as a key factor in criminal recidivism (Vorobev and Arkadevich 1991). Jacoby and Brenda (1997) found that the type of relationship, quality of visits (frequency, duration, etc.) and other social support during imprisonment were significantly related to a higher quality of life upon release. The most recent research available in this area found that being married was associated with a 40% reduction in reoffending amongst men (Laub 2003; also Wright and Wright 1992; Martin and Webster 1971).

5.2 Services developed for offenders, their children, and families to enhance integration into the community and build supports seem to show particular promise for reducing further

offending (Johnson, Selber, and Lauderdale 1998). A study conducted at Indiana University found that benefits of enabling and encouraging prisoner-family ties included decreased recidivism, improved mental health for both prisoners and family members, and increased probability of reunification of the family household after the prisoner's release (Hairston 1991). Constructive family involvement may therefore provide a key to effective rehabilitative work in prisons, and some prisons in the UK have experimented with this (see for example a description of the Feltham Family Support Group, in National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994: 6). Research elsewhere (Khokhryakov 1989) has suggested that people in prison, following separation from family and friends, may lean more on other prisoners as a surrogate family or "we" and identify prison officials as a "they". Separation from family and friends increases prisoners' sense of alienation between themselves and the rest of society. Prisoners who maintain family ties, in contrast, may be less likely to accept the norms and patterns of behaviour of the prison subculture (Klein et al. 2002). Arguably, then, encouraging ties between prisoners and their families wherever possible reduces divisions between prisoners and staff, and between offenders and society (Loucks 2004, forthcoming).

What 'works' for families?

5.3 Such research shows a number of positive outcomes for prisoners when family ties are maintained. Again, however, what is less clear is what support and intervention is effective for *families* of people in prison. Springer and colleagues (2000) note a substantial gap in information regarding effective interventions with children with an incarcerated family member, despite compelling evidence that these children are at high risk of future offending. Indeed, Loucks noted the substantial difficulty in providing definite information about 'what works' in this area:

One problem with feedback and monitoring of family support work is that the impact on prisoners and their families is difficult to measure. Concrete measures of performance and quality are virtually non-existent if the service is based on 'soft' concepts such as family ties. (2004, forthcoming: 2.37)

Grimshaw and King comment that, unfortunately, "One of the consequences of a continued failure to provide information about... 'what works' would be to induce a sense of powerlessness

in practitioners which undermines the desire to do more than ‘manage’ a case” (2002: 28). A lack of quantitative measures of performance may indeed have implications for attracting funding to particular support initiatives. The difficulty in finding ‘hard’ data does not mean, however, that an initiative is not worthwhile or that it does not have an impact on the target audience (also Action for Prisoners’ Families 2003b).

5.4 Rather than concrete, quantitative evidence of ‘effectiveness’, the available literature more often give examples of initiatives that appear promising due to positive feedback or similar qualitative measures. This section therefore outlines initiatives found to be the most promising for assisting families in maintaining ties with their relations in prison and in dealing with the impact of incarceration.

Visits

5.5 Visits are one of the main means in which prisoners and their families maintain contact (Lloyd 1992; Light 1993; Richards et al. 1994), and much of the literature focuses on the crucial role of visits in maintaining family contact and thereby in reducing recidivism (Ohlin 1954; Woolf 1991; Haines 1990; Wright and Wright 1992; Ditchfield 1994). Good visits are therefore essential to good relations and maintenance of family ties (see also Gabel and Johnston 1995). The opening statement of a document prepared jointly by the Home Office, Prison Service, Save the Children, and the Federation of Prisoners’ Families Support Groups (1993) states that “Family ties help ensure a prisoner’s reintegration into life outside. For that reason alone it makes sense to encourage prison visits” (see also Haines 1990; Ditchfield 1994; Social Exclusion Unit 2002). However, visits are likely to have an even wider influence:

Perhaps in the beginning, through the vehicle of visits, prisons should actively seek to harness the interest and commitment which many families show towards prisoners. Experience and research tell us that families can have a very real influence on the way in which prisoners think and behave. For some of course, this influence is a negative and destructive one, but for others, the influence can be positive and the strength and stability of positive family relationships can impact significantly on how settled or disruptive a prisoner is throughout his sentence. That said, it is important to be proactive about involving families,

through the medium of visits, in influencing the attitude and response of prisoners - especially in the crucial early stages of their sentences as well as at the important pre-release phase - and how that might be achieved. (HMCIP for Scotland 1996: 52)

Prisoners and families are not the only ones to benefit: the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service noted that good visits benefit prison officers too, as “... good visits also mean better behaved prisoners and more easily managed prison halls” (2000: 6).

5.6 At the very least, play provision – ideally supervised - should be available for children and young people in prison visiting areas (Philbrick 2003; McEvoy et al. 1999). Provision for extended family visits may enhance the quality of visits even further (NEPACS 1997). Some provision already exists in Scottish prisons and should be encouraged. The Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (1995) recommended longer and more regular visits where children could be involved as part of a family (in this case in visits to female prisoners) and ideally in more natural surroundings where, for example, prisoners could prepare food for their visitors. Special visits such as those to the Little Cherubs Unit in HMPI Cornton Vale exist to some degree for qualifying prisoners, but these could be developed further. The Inspectorate in England and Wales (1997), for example, recommended full day visits at all women’s prisons as well as consideration for allowing overnight stays by children. This followed the popularity of schemes at HMPs Holloway¹⁴ and Askham Grange in which mothers and children could participate in activities such as face painting and board games as well as ‘normal’ activities such as meals. Mothers involved in these visits have reported beneficial effects on themselves and on their children (King 1991). Kids VIP (Philbrick 2003) has also noted success in the use of storytellers at extended children’s visits, and good feedback from themed and seasonal work with children of prisoners at longer-term establishments. Philbrick emphasises, however, that “No matter how good the play area, for it to be really successful it must be part of a holistic, child-friendly experience” (*ibid.*: 13).

¹⁴ Despite the acclaim for the scheme, no all-day children’s visits have taken place at Holloway for over a year and no Lifer Day for even longer (Joseph 2003).

5.7 Specific provision for children during visits is essential for a good visit. Good, supervised crèche facilities keep children from getting bored and give adults time for quality conversation (*Prisons Video Magazine* 2003). Visits halls with facilities for activities can also improve the quality of family contact (European Action Research Committee 1996; Seymour and Hairston 1998). However, contact between children and their families in prison is equally important; good crèche facilities keep children occupied but may also keep children from interacting with the people they are there to visit.

5.8 To facilitate contact, a few establishments have developed special visits specifically for children. Such visits are generally less formal and allow greater interaction between children and their families in prison:

In the last prison I was in before here there was more input for children's visiting. They had a 'playtime' where you could spend time together painting, reading books – doing fun things together rather than sitting in a formal room. It's good to have that time with children, and it keeps that bond going. (cited in Katz 2002: 41)

HMP Magilligan in Northern Ireland is one establishment that developed Child-Centred Visits. For these visits, prisoners have a regular visit for the first hour, then partners and carers withdraw to the Visitors' Centre for the second hour, leaving children in the visits room with their fathers. Each child is given a box for items they have brought from home such as pictures or school projects in to show their fathers. Children leave their boxes with Security staff for screening at the beginning of the regular visit so the boxes are ready in time for the Child-Centred Visit. Fathers eat lunch with their children during these visits and are allowed to move freely in the visits room.

5.9 The Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales developed a list of Expectations for prisoners' contact with family and friends. In the Inspectorate's view, all visitors should be given "clear and up to date information in advance about how to get to the establishment, visiting hours and the procedures to expect when they arrive at the establishment and again whenever circumstances or procedures change" (July 2001: Expectation 17). Families or prisoners with

particular needs during visits, such as for information in other languages or facilities for the deaf, should have access to these (Loucks 2002; Gerrard 2000). Family induction schemes are an ideal opportunity to provide comprehensive information to families and, importantly, to give them an opportunity to ask questions.

Lichfield held a family day at the prison which I thought was a brilliant idea. I was shown around the prison with my son – it really helped me to understand what it was like for him, helped get rid of the horrible visions of what prisons are like that I had before. You see all these stupid things on TV and frighten yourself to death but it isn't really like that. (cited in Katz 2002: 41)

5.10 Other types of contact with families could also be enhanced. Telephones for prisoners are now a regular feature in prison establishments, though these do not receive incoming calls, the time allowed and opportunities for calls may be limited (Joseph 2003), and the number of telephone cards or credits allowed per week are often based on the prisoner's regime level. The Chief Inspector for England and Wales (1997) recommended that no such limits be imposed on the number of telephone cards that may be purchased, as long as these are clearly marked as the property of the prisoner purchasing them. He also stated that some prisons allowed telephone calls (five minutes once a month) at public expense to foreign nationals who did not receive visits. He recommended this as good practice and said such calls could be extended to other people (in this case women) who did not receive visits "in view of their primary carer role" (1997: 8.07). The Chief Inspector went on to say that provision of home leaves and town visits should be reconsidered for female prisoners, as they are generally at less risk of escape and much less frequently abused the system of leave prior to its restriction.

Visitors' Centres

5.11 Negative feelings surrounding visits tended to be most acute before and after the visits themselves, "underlining the traditional arguments for the provision of Visitors' Centres at the prison which can offer professional support and assistance at the point of contact" (McEvoy et al. 1999: 184). Supporting visits through something like a Visitors' Centre seems a logical means of maintaining a prisoner's family ties or other links with the outside world. Indeed, Lord Rooker argued in 2002 that "it is crucial that every prison should have a Visitors' Centre"

(*Hansard* 7 March 2002; also National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994; HMCIP 1997 regarding prisons for women; HMCIP July 2001). Research into Visitors' Centres in prisons in California a number of years ago found that "The understanding and compassion offered by the visitor Center is frequently the only encouragement and reinforcement [visitors] receive" (Neto and Wilson 1982: 71). In its annual report in July 2001, the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales noted that:

Inspectors should expect to find a prison culture which recognises the value and importance of family and other relationships and contacts... and which ensures that family links are maintained and developed during custody for the prisoner's successful reintegration into the community on release. (2001: 32)

According to Loucks (2002), prison Visitors' Centres appear to be an important means of fulfilling this expectation.

5.12 In her research into Visitors' Centres, Loucks (2002) noted apparent differences between Centres run with uniformed staff compared to non-uniformed (usually civilian) staff. With the important exception of prisoners' welfare, virtually all of the queries raised in prison-run Centres related to procedural issues (rules and regulations, legal processes, travel expenses, etc.). None of the Centres run by uniformed staff mentioned issues related to the families themselves. Centres run without uniformed staff - usually outside agencies - frequently mentioned the effects of imprisonment on families such as stigma, trauma for children, treatment of babies and children on visits, attitudes of some prison staff (namely the perception of being treated as a criminal; see Social Exclusion Unit 2002), and difficulty coping without a partner or with children. This may simply reflect the way different people replied to the questionnaire. However, it may also relate to the more important possibility that visitors are less willing to speak openly to or seek assistance from uniformed staff about personal issues. This apparent hesitancy of visitors to open up to uniformed staff implies that Centres staffed solely by uniformed officers may not fulfil the potential of Visitors' Centre staff as advocates for prisoners' families. Regardless of uniform, however, Loucks (2002) noted that the important characteristics for staff in Visitors' Centres are a consistent and dedicated team of staff with a thorough understanding of the needs of visitors to prisons and an ability to tap into those needs.

5.13 The overriding message from Loucks (2002) is the contribution Visitors' Centres seem to make in easing the visits process for visitors and prison staff alike. The vast majority of prison Governors with Visitors' Centres at their establishment or with past experience of them replied positively to the overall benefits of Centres for most prisons. Research into Visitors' Centres in California showed similar results:

It should be understood that traveling a long distance, going through lengthy processing with unsympathetic guards and then seeing a loved one for the first time confined and having no rights is an emotionally and physically exhausting ordeal.... Emotional support services, while they exist on an informal basis, meet a real need of visitors.... It is noteworthy that many Center users felt the most useful service they received was the support and empathy of the Center staff. (Neto and Wilson 1982: 70)

Beneficial services did not necessarily need to be expensive or overly time-consuming, as again the American research explains: "... when visitors were asked to identify services, many mentioned the 'reassuring presence' of the [Centre] itself, and the comfort and satisfaction from knowing someone cares and understands" (*ibid.*, p. 68).

5.14 An overview of research and resources (Grimshaw and King 2002) noted that visitors' centres, community centres, and support groups provided the best access to resources for prisoners' families. Grimshaw and King comment that much of the dissemination of information to prisoners' families is through Visitors' Centres, perhaps not least because they provide immediate, face-to-face contact. Only about 8% of prisoners appear to have contacts with a local community group or community groups in their home area (NACRO 2000a); Visitors' Centres can therefore play an important role in reducing the isolation of prisoners and their families. Staff from Centres can also liaise between the various groups: one Californian prison created a Visiting Improvement Group to discuss visiting, made up of prisoners, prison staff, and staff from the Visitors' Centre. The research there found the Group to be a very important mode of increasing cooperation and communication between the prison and Centre (Neto and Wilson 1982).

5.15 Lack of a prison Visitors' Centre often creates difficulty for organisations to access prisoners' families (Prison Reform Trust 2004, forthcoming). Development workers at Action for Prisoners' Families in England are currently attempting to do exactly that in their Hampshire Children's Fund Project. In the first instance they are mailing out information/resource packs to children in the mainstream and to existing young people's organisations in the area. They then intend to organise focus groups of children and young people based on the response from the initial mailing. Other methods of contacting prisoners' families may therefore be possible using existing resources, though such methods may be considerably more time-consuming and unwieldy.

Family Support staff

5.16 Family Support work such as that of FCDOs in Scotland and elsewhere shows a great deal of potential for addressing the needs of prisoners' families. In a review of the role of FCDOs in one prison, the prison's Operations Manager commented:

How can you balance, on the one hand, the needs of managing visits from members of the public to a maximum-security penal establishment, and at the same time, facilitate relaxed and meaningful contact between a man and his family?.... The existence of the FCDO at [prison] goes a long way towards achieving this goal and balancing these two objectives.... I am well aware of the barrier which can exist between staff, visitors and prisoners, and I am pleased to recognise that in the role of FCDO we have people here... who have gone as far as anyone in the SPS to break down this barrier. (Family Contact and Development Team 2000: Foreword 2)

Indeed, the contribution of Family Support staff in one prison in England motivated the Operational Manager for the Juvenile Operational Management Group to highlight the post as an example of good practice for the Prison Service (HM Prison Service 2002). The Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales (1997) believed such a post should exist at least in all prisons for women, where support for family contact was arguably greater.

5.17 Despite its criticism of the lack of funding and support for FCDOs in many prisons, the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service highlighted a “commendable structured implementation process” for the role. This process is as follows:

- the careful selection of prison officers who are willing to take on the FCDO role;
- training in relevant aspects of the role;
- a communication strategy which advises staff, prisoners and visitors of the creation of the role and of its relevance to each;
- the allocation of time set aside to perform the role (particularly for the FCDO to be available in the visit room/waiting area during visit sessions and to have time to follow up referrals);
- the allocation of a continuing reasonable budget to purchase and replace what is required (toys, equipment, information posters, etc.);
- management support to develop new initiatives. (2000: 3-4)

FCDOs, prisoners, and prisoners’ families also highlighted these issues (Loucks 2004 forthcoming).

5.18 No one prison establishment in Scotland appeared to meet all of these criteria, though a number had made clear progress towards these aims. Both HMPs Edinburgh and Cornton Vale now have staff working as FCDOs full time, for example. The system of family support at HMP Shotts has received particular acclaim throughout the SPS for their innovation in making contact with families and in providing relevant information. Prisoners’ families are in great need of support which prison staff are ideally placed to provide. Responses to research into the work of Family Support staff in the UK (Loucks 2004, forthcoming) show repeated evidence of benefits to families and equally to prison regimes and security: where families, prisoners, and staff are able to break down barriers, the rewards will be evident through the increased communication and reduced tension in virtually every aspect of prison life.

5.19 If prisoners, families, and prison staff are to benefit from this work, Family Support staff cannot be viewed as an ‘optional extra’. Simply labelling an officer or civilian staff member as a

Family Support worker is not enough. Staff must be those who are genuinely committed to the job. They must be given the time to give the role their full attention and the resources to carry out the work in a meaningful, well-planned, and comprehensive manner. Training in relevant issues such as child protection should be available and accessible. Support from managers and from other staff both in theory and in practice must be available without question. Links with others in the prison such as throughcare staff, social work or probation staff, and staff in Visitors' Centres should be developed, as should links with relevant organisations outside. While Family Officers do not (and arguably should not) need to be carbon copies of each other, links with those in other prisons, formally and informally, would be of benefit for ideas and for mutual support.

5.20 The findings in Loucks (2004, forthcoming) showed that creating the role of Family Contact Development Officer is not as straightforward as it sounds *if the job is to be done well*. Having Family Support staff in the prison can be a lifeline for some family members; such staff members are often their only means of contacting loved ones urgently, of learning about the prison regime, and of providing informed support, especially in prisons where no other support for families such as a Visitors' Centre is available. Family Support is therefore a job worth doing well.

Information

5.21 Research by the National Family and Parenting Institute (Henricson 2002) found that parents value learning from the experiences of other parents. Parents who have been through experiences such as imprisonment of a partner or other family member may therefore be a valuable source of information and encouragement to others. Respondents to Grimshaw and King's (2002) survey of carers and of prisoners' family and friends in England and Wales said that support groups (parent groups, outreach workers), help with coping (coping with loss, advice on what to tell the children), and information on available resources were of the most use in helping them deal with their concerns. An awareness of the legal rights that may affect them, such as in the care or guardianship of children, may put carers in a better position to address their needs as well (Family Rights Group, n. d.).

5.22 Grimshaw and King's review of resources for prisoners' families internationally uncovered vast quantities of information available to this group. However, they also noted that different types of information are more effective in different types of formats. Leaflets, for example, tend to be of most use for difficult issues such as bereavement (Henricson 2002). Further, the target audience must be considered carefully: what is helpful to a prisoner's partner may not be equally helpful to a young child or to a teenager. The main findings of Grimshaw and King's work in this area, outlined in their Executive Summary, are worth quoting in full:

Leaflets deal best with priority issues such as getting support, informing children, and preparing for a first visit to prison. However in the longer term more substantial resources can make it possible for them to consider and prepare for what lies ahead with increased confidence.

An assessment of resources for children and young people showed that material that helps children to learn about imprisonment and understand their own feelings can be formulated in several ways – for example, material that stimulates writing or drawing, or books that children can read.

Stimulus material can be useful if it gives expression to feelings that do not emerge in ordinary conversation. However, questioning approaches may not readily suit children whose silence is in itself a meaningful response to their situation.

Books for children should make use of stories that can mediate the child's feelings and encourage reflection on them. The child's needs should be at the centre of the stories. A reader's guide for carers and parents should be included to enable a positive and encouraging dialogue to take place about features of the hero/ine's experiences compared with children's own experiences.

Resources for young people should be based on consultations with them.¹⁵ Materials should respect young people's rights to take an independent view and be treated by adults with respect. Views held by young people about parents are likely to be ambivalent: materials should encourage reflection on those viewpoints. Relationships with peers are an important feature of young people's

¹⁵ See for example the work of the Young People's Advisory Group set up by Action for Prisoners' Families (APF 2003b). The YPAG developed the information booklet, *Who's Guilty?*, and produced the video, *It Could Be You*.

lives so it is advisable to refer to situations in which communications with friends and acquaintances pose choices and dilemmas. Material for children and teenagers is in short supply and needs to be supplemented in the future. (2002: 4)

5.23 Their main report embellishes these guidelines as follows:

For families, information should be targeted at members of the family, address priority issues, be available in minority languages, and refer to subjects that families find important, such as prison procedures, financial issues, family safety and health, education, sources of help and support, or complaints/appeals. If the resource is meant to be supportive it should deal with family ties and role changes. If it is a counseling resource it should offer emotional reassurance. Resources for parents/carers should address their own needs and give supportive information about practical steps to confront problems including advice on communication with children and with agencies.

Resources aimed at children should use accepted techniques for communicating with children, such as stories involving fictional children that assist a child's understanding of problems. Materials should address children's expectations about the parents and family, focus on concerns about the unknown and refer to the future.

Resources for young people should use up to date techniques and references. They should use quotes from young people, focus on getting the facts straight, and assure young people that their self-esteem can be undiminished. Encouragement to discuss the behaviour of grown-ups, including parents, should be given. They should outline any implications of parental imprisonment for young people's homes, schooling or careers. (ibid.: 7)

Ideally resources should also be available in Braille and on audio cassette. A popular option for children and young people is for imprisoned parents to make videos for them from inside the prison, even if these are simply for storytelling rather than for transmitting factual information.

In Scotland, video storytelling for children is currently available to prisoners in HMYOI Polmont and HMPI Cornton Vale.¹⁶

5.24 The authors go on to say that, where relevant, information should specify priorities, such as immediate needs upon imprisonment such as benefits and continuity of services, followed by discussion of less urgent issues (p. 34). The NACRO leaflet, *Outside Help* (1999), has had positive feedback from users of its comprehensive coverage of the main issues affecting families during imprisonment (Grimshaw and King 2002). Resources should also be up to date and have clear dates of publication. Ideally information could also be linked to sources on the internet, which may be updated more regularly (see for example Department of Work and Pensions 2001, and ‘Information and support for families’, above). Regular reviews and updates are also important for policies and procedures affecting prisoners and their families. Bennett (2003) suggests these should be reviewed annually to take into account good practice and new legislation as they arise.

5.25 A number of publications offer guidance to people and organisations that work with prisoners’ families. For example, the Prison Service in England and Wales (1998) published a guide to good practice for Visitors’ Centres. This is currently being updated, largely based on information from research into Prison Visitors’ Centres by Action for Prisoners’ Families (then the Federation of Prisoners’ Families Support Groups) and the Prison Reform Trust (Loucks 2002). A guide to good practice from Scotland, highly rated in Grimshaw and King’s (2002) review, is the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families’ (now Families Outside) guide about children visiting prisons (Morrison and McCulloch 1998).

5.26 The dissemination of information is at least as important as the information itself. As mentioned above, Grimshaw and King (2002) emphasise the importance of making information available when it is needed. The authors said Visitors’ Centres were often important sources of information, but equally said that courts and police stations are very important places of contact

¹⁶ A collaboration between the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Western Education and Library Board, and NIACRO has taken this scheme a step further: at HMP Magilligan, imprisoned fathers and their children choose a book together during Child-Centred Visits (bonding visits), which the father then records onto an audio tape. Upon the child’s next visit, the child receives a ‘gift bag’ containing the tape and a copy of the book. See www.eurochips.org/uk_news.html.

and have the benefit of being available at the earliest stages of contact with the criminal justice system.

Programmes and support projects

5.27 A survey in England by Action for Prisoners' Families indicates that support groups are key for helping families (Grimshaw and King 2002). Research into the Home Start scheme, for example, has shown some benefits to families (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003). Parenting programmes have also shown some success, with some research claiming that such programmes can reduce reconviction among young offenders by 50% (*ibid.*: 43; also Kazdin et al. 1992; Strayhorn and Weidman 1991; Welsh and Farrington 2004)). Examples of parenting programmes that have shown positive effects include the Webster-Stratton model (Scott et al. 2001; Webster-Stratton and Hammond 1997) and, specifically for work with isolated and vulnerable parents, the Hilton Davies model (Goodman and Adler 2004). The latter model uses one-to-one work with parents to address parenting issues alongside social and welfare issues.

5.28 In the United States, parent education has shown value for the self-development of incarcerated mothers and for the welfare of their children (Thompson and Harm 2000).¹⁷ Researchers in Colorado describe positive outcomes from a collaborative multi-service programme that offers assistance with employment, child support, and family reconnection to ex-offenders with children. According to their findings, fathers who attended the John Inman Work and Family Center (WFC) had higher rates of employment and child support payment and returned to prison at lower rates than the general population of offenders (Pearson and Davis 2003).

5.29 The Home Office consultation paper in England and Wales, *Every Child Matters*, recommends Family Learning programmes among other initiatives as a positive means of strengthening relationships between parents and children. While the paper mentions such programmes for the general population, they are already in use in at least one prison: HMP Wolds runs a Family Learning programme in which both parents participate in structured play sessions with their children at the prison. The positive feedback from the course suggests

¹⁷ See also Gabel and Johnston 1995 for a review of child-focused interventions, and Boudouris (1996; also Jeffries et al. 2001) for a review of programmes in the U.S. and elsewhere.

benefits for prisoners and their families alike (see *Inmates and Families at HMP Wolds* 2003). The Fathering Programme at HMP Greenock in Scotland has also won praise (Katz 2003).

5.30 *Every Child Matters* also recommends support programmes for fathers as well as mothers “... so that all children, but especially those who are living apart from their fathers, develop positive relationships with both parents” (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003: 3.1). Although still in draft form, a prison-based parenting programme designed by Sure Start workers in Northern Ireland includes a module on ‘Parenting from a Distance’ specifically to address the issue of being an absent parent, through imprisonment or otherwise. This seems to be an inherently logical and useful addition to any institutionally-based parenting course.

5.31 Hennebel, Fowler, and Costall (2002) identified a number of good practices in their research into families of drug-dependent prisoners. Belgium, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic offer community-based services that provide support directly to families in prison visitors’ centres. The feelings of fear and shame that often prevent families from accessing support diminish once initial contact has been made. In Wales, HMP Parc organises special visits for prisoners with a history of drug use, their families, and their drug worker. The prison also has a Family Day three times a year in which selected prisoners are allowed to see their families in private and to meet social workers to discuss various issues. Also in the UK, Adfam workers offer support to families of drug-dependent people in or out of custody, including support at prison Visitors’ Centres in the London area.

5.32 Specific supports for young people show great potential. The Young People’s Support Project (see ‘Existing resources’, above; Action for Prisoners’ Families 2003c) is one example of this, where the programme was designed in consultation with young people and is aimed specifically at their needs. The (extensive) basic principles of the programme are outlined in APF’s report.

5.33 Wolleswinkel (2002) identified projects involving ex-prisoners and their families as successful, such as that of a hostel in Israel (Hoffman 2000) run in cooperation with ex-prisoners and student volunteers as ‘buddies’ of the children of imprisoned parents. More general services may also be of value (and less stigmatising, as they do not identify users as prisoners’ families

per se). Utting and colleagues (1993) give an example of the Parent Link Family Centre in Exeter, which provided its services as part of a package of services provided directly on a large council estate. Based at a baby clinic, the Link Centre combined post-natal care with a mother and toddler group, a pre-school playgroup, and drop-in activity days. The Centre was open to anyone on the estate and received positive feedback from participants.

5.34 As with any prison-based initiative such as FCDOs, support services and programmes in prisons must have the backing of prison managers and staff: "...an essential feature of program success is getting corrections staff on board early..." (DeAngelis 2001: 6). The limited 'hard' measures of success of such projects means both staff support and funding can be in short supply. The positive feedback and overwhelming weight of experience of people and organisations that work in this area shows, however, that this is a gap worth filling.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Article 3(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reads:

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Shaw emotively argued that "The pain and harm inflicted unintentionally on children by the sentencer of their father could be described as 'institutionalised child abuse'" (1987: 64). Regardless of definition, the imprisonment of a family member clearly has a significant impact on those left outside. This includes social effects, such as financial hardship, division of the family, and disrupted schooling; institutional effects, such as difficulty with prison rules and staff and lack of awareness of procedures and available supports; and personal effects, such as poor physical and psychological health, insecurity, and acting out of children through physical and emotional problems, disruptive behaviour, and rejection of parental authority (Cregan and Aungles 1997). These factors, Lloyd argues, add up "to a picture of a very clear failure to acknowledge the rights of children whose parents are imprisoned" (1995: 13), not to mention the impact on adult family members.

6.2 The consultation document in England and Wales, *Every Child Matters*, emphasises that strong relationships with parents, family members and other significant adults act as a powerful protective factor against disadvantage for children. This is particularly the case for children in early years prior to school (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2003). The evidence presented in this report shows that maintenance of ties between children and family members is at least as important during imprisonment. In a Prison Service Briefing in November 2000 Martin Narey, then Director General of the Prison Service in England and Wales, stated “I cannot overemphasise the important role that families play in helping to achieve effective rehabilitation and reducing re-offending.” He later reiterated this, saying “A stable, supportive family throughout the sentence is a key factor in preventing re-offending 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” (ADFAM National and HM Prison Service 2001).

6.3 A thematic review by the Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation in England and Wales (2001) highlighted the lack of consistency in work towards social integration and that families wanted to be more involved in sentence planning and preparation for release. The review subsequently recommended that the Prison Service create a national ‘What Works’ strategy which should include the facilitation of quality contact with “... families and friends, volunteer visitors or mentors who can contribute to resettlement and continue to offer support after release” (rec. 3f). A number of positive initiatives currently exist, but many of them seem to depend largely on the initiative and enthusiasm of a few dedicated staff (Boswell 2002). A number of factors such as fear of stigma or lack of awareness often prevent families from accessing the supports that exist for them. As a matter of urgency, provisions for assistance in the maintenance of family ties and support for prisoners’ families should become a standard part of the regime in prisons (*ibid.*) as well as an acknowledged remit of organisations outside, if they are to target their work appropriately and effectively.

6.4 Research in Australia identified several needs for services that summarise those noted in much of the literature. These include:

- Specialist counselling services and support groups for children;
- Specialist counselling and support for caregivers of prisoners’ children and families;
- Relationship counselling that can be conducted in the prison;

- Family-orientated Visitors' Centres at the prison;
- Education for prisoners in child development;
- Practical parenting education for prisoners, with opportunities to learn and develop with their children as part of the programme;
- Opportunities for prisoners and their children to play together in a supportive environment;
- Support for children to visit family members in prison without their caregiver to enable them to spend time alone with their parent/relative; and
- Opportunities for prisoners to participate more fully in decision-making for their children and so take some responsibility for their care. (VACRO 2000: 11-12)

Some of these services already exist, as does evidence of good practice. However at least as much evidence exists for the need to develop such services and indeed to increase awareness of and access to appropriate support for those who need it.

6.5 Much work has been done in the area of prisoners' families since Peart and Asquith's research over a decade ago. Many more support services have been developed, and examples of good practice are in evidence internationally. Of note, however, is that the vast majority of literature for this report came from outside Scotland. While general needs and examples of good practice are likely to apply here as well, a clear gap is evident in what locally based families and service users need and want. Grimshaw and King noted a widespread need for creative methods of transmitting relevant quality information to prisoners' families, suggesting sponsorship of "a book and video competition to promote informative and creative depictions of imprisonment and families" (2002: 51).

6.6 Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership and Families Outside call for urgent consultation with families and existing organisations to recognise and address the needs of this group that, as described in research in Denmark, are too easily hidden in a 'prison without bars' (Christiensen 2001).

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Annex 1: Extract from Grimshaw and King 2002 - Publications in the UK for Prisoners and their Families

PUBLICATIONS: NON-STATUTORY ORGANISATIONS

ADDACTION

Parents Guide to Drugs: What you should know

ADFAM

Prison Drugs and You: A booklet for the family and friends of prisoners

Living with a drug user - for the partners of drug users

Living with a drug user - For the Parents of Drug Users

Are you worried about your mum, dad or carer using Drugs or Alcohol?

FEDERATION OF PRISONERS' FAMILIES SUPPORT GROUPS (now Action for Prisoners' Families)

Good Practice Guidelines for Support Groups

A National Directory for Prisoner Families

A Problem Shared: Starting Your Own Support Group

Good Practice Guidelines for Support Groups

Action for Prisoners Families (Newsletter)

Black and Asian Prisoners' Families

No-One Ever Asked Me- Report on Young People with a family member in Prison

I Didn't Think Anyone Would Understand, Miss: Supporting Prisoners' Children in Schools

Who's Guilty?

Living in the Shadows, - Tackling the Difficulties Faced by Families of Prisoners in the Community (Conference Report)

HOWARD LEAGUE

The Voice of the Child: the Impact on Children of their Mother's Imprisonment

The Families Matter

NACRO

Prisoners' Information Book: Visiting and Keeping in Touch

Outside Help: Practical Information for the Families and Friends of People in Prison

The Outsiders

Forgotten Victims: How Prison Affects the Family

Opening the doors: Prisoners Families

NO WAY TRUST

Prison! Me! No Way! (Video and information pack for teachers)

ORMISTON CHILDRENS AND FAMILIES TRUST

My Mum's in Prison- What About Me?

My Dad's In Prison- What About Me?

My Special Book: I'm Going to Visit My Dad in Prison

What Shall I tell the Children?

Visiting Prison with your child

My Special Book: I'm Going to Visit My Mum in Prison

Prisoners' Families: The Everyday Reality

PACT

Working with Prisoners and Prisoners' Families: Information Advice Support for Prisoners' families

PRISON REFORM TRUST

Men in Prison, Women in Prison and Young Offenders

Prisoners' Information Book

PRISONERS ABROAD

What about the Children?

SAVE THE CHILDREN

A Resource for Teachers: Working with Children of Prisoners

Children Visiting Holloway Prison: Inside and Outside Perspectives on the All Day Visits Scheme at HMP Holloway

Sentenced by Association

More than a Box of Toys

Sentenced by Association: A Training Pack

Prisoners Children: Research Policy and Practice

A Code of Good Practice: Children and the Prison System

Children Visiting Parents in Prison: guidelines for setting up extended visiting schemes

SECURICOR

Home Detention Curfew

PUBLICATIONS: STATUTORY ORGANISATIONS

DEPARTMENT for EDUCATION and SKILLS

Supporting young people with a prisoner in the family (Connexions)

Supporting Prisoners Children in Schools, Gloucester LEA

Policy for the Education of Children with a Parent or Close Relative in Prison,
Gloucestershire County Education Council

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

Benefits for Prisoners and Their Families

Prisoners and Their Families

HER MAJESTY'S PRISON SERVICE

Homecoming

Guide for Visitors To Prison

Assisted Prison Visits Scheme

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Me and My Family: Dealing with Separation and Divorce

My family's splitting up: A guide for young people

My family's changing

Parenting Plan

Parents and Children: Dealing with Separation and Divorce

BOOKS

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The Parenting Role of Imprisoned Fathers by G. Boswell and P. Wedge (Jessica Kingsley: London, 1999)

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Annex 2: EUROCHIPS web site: international publications relevant to prisoners and their families

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Annex 3: UK Helplines for Prisoners' Families

Aftermath (for families of very serious offenders)	0114 275 8520
Childline/Childline Scotland	0800 1111
Get Connected	0808 808 4994
HARP (Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners, East Anglia)	0800 389 3003
Outmates	0208 665 9562
PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust, London and the South)	0800 085 3021
Parentline Plus	0808 800 2222
PFPS (Prisoners' Friends and Families Service)	0808 808 3444
POPS (Partners of Prisoners, North West and North Wales)	0161 277 9066
Prison Link (for families of Black and Asian prisoners)	0121 551 1207 0121 523 0695 (evenings)
Prisoners' Families Helpline	0808 808 2003
Prisoners' Families Information Line (Scotland)	0500 83 93 83
Prison Watch	01332 756 158
Release (drugs and legal advice)	0207 729 9904
The Samaritans	08457 909 090
SHARP (Shropshire Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners, West Midlands and Wales)	01743 245 365

Annex 4: Contact details for organisations in the UK

Action for Prisoners' Families

Riverbank House
1 Putney Bridge Approach
London SW6 3JD
(020) 7384 1987
www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk
www.actionpf.org.uk

Adfam

(020) 7928 8900

Alanon

(0141) 339 8884

Alateen

(0141) 221 7356

Barnardo's (Scotland)

(0131) 334 9893

BARS

C/o Woodhill Visitors' Centre
Tattenhoe Street
Milton Keynes MK4 4DA

Bourne Trust

(020) 7582 1313

Children in Scotland

(0131) 228 8484

Children's Fund

www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/childrensfund/index.cfm

Families Outside

19A Albany Street
Edinburgh EH1 3QN
(0131) 557 9800
admin@familiesoutside.org.uk
www.familiesoutside.org.uk
Prisoners' Families Helpline 0500 83 93 83

Family Rights Group

(020) 7923 2628
advice line: 0800 731 1696
www.frg.org.uk

Fathers Direct

www.fathersdirect.com

Frank Buttle Trust

(020) 7828 7311

Gingerbread Scotland

(0141) 353 0953

HALOW

(0121) 551 9799

HOPE

(0141) 552 0229
hope.organisation@virgin.net

Howard League for Penal Reform

(020) 7249 7373
howardleague@ukonline.co.uk
www.howardleague.org

Kids VIP

(0141) 357 6966

Mothers' Union

(01828) 627 229

NACRO

(020) 7582 6500

NCH Action for Children (Scotland)

(0141) 332 4041

One Parent Families (Scotland)

(0131) 556 3899

helpline 0800 018 5026

info@opfs.org.uk

Ormiston Children and Families Trust

(01473) 724 517

Parentline Plus

www.parentlineplus.org

helpline 0808 800 2222

Podigt

Isobel Stewart, Podigt Creations

(07732) 306 848

pod@podigt.com

www.podigt.com

Prison Fellowship Scotland

(0141) 552 1288

pfscotland@cqm.co.uk

Prison Link (Northern Ireland)

(028) 9026 2492

Prison Reform Trust

(020) 7251 5070

prr@prisonreformtrust.org.uk

www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

Prisoners' Wives and Family Society

(020) 7278 3981

Relate

Relateline 0845 130 4010

SACRO

(0131) 624 7270

info@sacro.org.uk

www.sacro.org.uk

Salvation Army

(0141) 881 5291

Samaritans

(0141) 639 5523 or (0141) 248 4488

Save the Children

(0131) 527 8200

Toybox

(0141) 339 3428