



voicing the needs
of families affected
by imprisonment

Strategic Plan

2016 – 2019

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Description of Business

Summary

Imprisonment is a traumatic experience for families, and its impact is often significant and enduring. The imprisonment of a relative has an impact on the social, emotional, financial and, especially for children and young people, educational development of the remaining family members.

Families Outside is the only national organisation that works exclusively on behalf of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland.

Families Outside is recognised as a national Scottish charity by the Inland Revenue and is constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Vision

Our vision is for families affected by imprisonment to be treated with justice and fairness so that they can live healthy, active lives free from stigma and impediment.

Mission Statement

Families Outside works to improve outcomes for children and families affected by imprisonment.

Description of Business (contd.)

Core Values, Principles, and Beliefs

- Families Outside is committed to equality and diversity.
- Family members should not be judged or discriminated against because a member of their family has been imprisoned.
- The responsibility for ensuring that families are not disadvantaged due to imprisonment of a family member lies with agencies in the social justice, inclusion (e.g. housing, employment, benefits), education, health, and care systems as well as with agencies in the criminal justice system. We therefore develop and promote partnerships with such organisations in order to achieve our goals. Where competition for funding is unavoidable, we will maintain open and honest dialogue with the other parties in order to maintain positive relationships.
- The needs of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland should be researched, acknowledged, and reflected in public policy and sustainable, accessible, and empowering services made available to meet these needs.
- Where appropriate to the families' best interests, relationships with their relative in prison should be actively supported and maintained and recognised as a significant contribution to reducing reoffending. Children separated from a parent due to imprisonment have the right to maintain their relationship with an imprisoned parent (as determined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- Our effectiveness will be measured by outcomes for individual families (e.g. through the Helpline and family support team) and in our impact on the responses of other agencies to families affected by imprisonment (e.g. through influencing policy and practice, through partnership work, and support of other organisations that work with families).
- Collaboration with other organisations is key to achieving our aims and to ensuring families have the best possible support, where and when they need it.
- We are committed to developing and maintaining high standards of financial and management practice in order to ensure efficiency and accountability to our clients, stakeholders, and funders.

Brief History

The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families was established in 1991 by professionals in criminal justice and childcare organisations who recognised that the needs of families affected by imprisonment were overlooked by all parts of the system. Initially hosted by Save the Children, the Forum initiated research into the impact of imprisonment on family members, which led to the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) establishing the role of Family Contact Development Officer (now FCOs) within prisons. The SPS also provided continued support through chairmanship of the Forum, the secondment of an officer to the Forum as the base from which to develop the FCDO role, and, until June 2015, a financial contribution to the Scottish Prisoners' Families Information Line (now the Families Outside Support & Information Helpline), set up in 1998, which provides a national confidential freephone service.

During 2001/02 the Management Committee of the Forum reviewed the progress of the organisation and subsequently implemented a change of name (to Families Outside) and constitutional status, appointed a Board of Directors with an independent chairman, and recruited a full time Director who joined the organisation in January 2003. The organisation has continued to grow ever since, taking an active role in the development of policy and practice nationally and in supporting locally-based family services. In October 2008, Families Outside entered into direct service provision for the first time through the recruitment of full-time family support workers.

In 2009/10, the Board restructured its Constitution, streamlining membership of the Board to create a smaller, more strategic group. Significant amongst these changes was that Board members would now be selected for the expertise they could contribute rather than automatically including people from particular organisations.

Current Challenges

A number of developments have an ongoing impact on the work of Families Outside. These include the following:

Changes to the structure of community justice

The division of Scottish Community Justice into eight Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) will be ending following a recommendation for this in the Report of the Angiolini Commission (2012) and subsequent Government review. The new structure for a localised system under the control of the 32 local authorities under the auspices of a unified Single Service has been outlined in the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 but has not yet been implemented. Current arrangements will remain in place until 2017, but the mode of implementation of the Act will have significant implications for how we deliver our service.

Financial hardship and welfare reform

Scottish local authorities have autonomy for their own governance as long as they work towards agreed national outcomes. This means that they have responsibility for allocation of funding. While some central government funding remains ring-fenced (e.g. Criminal Justice Social Work), non-statutory services increasingly have to apply directly to each of the 32 local councils to secure funding for their work. The current preference from the Scottish Government for Public Social Partnerships has mitigated against this challenge to some extent, though the shift in funding to Community Planning Partnerships under the Community Justice Act maintains funding at local levels.

Political uncertainty

Although the outcome of the Referendum for Scottish Independence favoured the status quo, the political divide within the UK continues to create uncertainty for people in Scotland. Following the Referendum, the Smith Commission recommended, and the UK Government accepted, a number of measures that would give Scotland increased fiscal autonomy. Some of the measures, such as the power to levy taxes, have not been implemented at the time of writing. Meanwhile, the Conservative majority government in Westminster continues with a programme of austerity likely to have an immediate impact on the families we support. This means that the Scottish Government is facing significant budget cuts, and the families we support are at continued risk of benefits sanctions and an increasingly restrictive welfare system. The 2016 Referendum regarding the potential UK exit from the European Union continues to underline the political differences north and south of the border. We have yet to see what this might mean in practice.

Single Outcomes

At a time when the demand for our work is increasing, continuing financial austerity means that funding for our work, especially over the longer term, remains uncertain. Meanwhile, many of the families we support are facing reductions in income due to ongoing changes in the social welfare system. Families Outside has the benefit of working towards preventative policies over both the short and long term, which is appealing to funders in times of financial hardship. The reality, however, is that many voluntary organisations and businesses are losing their funding, and both Government and Trust funds have less money to distribute.

Key Objectives and Targets 2016 – 2019

Key Objectives for 2016 - 2019

Based on this context, vision, and core values, the Key Objectives for Families Outside for the period of 2016 – 2019 are as follows:

- Families affected by imprisonment can readily access appropriate information and support at the time they need it. This in turn will improve their experience with the criminal justice system and mitigate its impact on them.
- Policy makers, decision makers, and relevant service providers will be well-informed about the issues facing families affected by imprisonment. They will recognise prisoners' families within their remit and take the needs of these families into account in the decisions they make and the services they provide.
- Families Outside will provide a sustainable and viable service as long as the demand for its work is evident.

Targets for 2016 - 2019

In order to achieve these objectives, our targets include the following actions:

- Raise awareness and influence policy and practice regarding families affected by imprisonment;
- Provide and increase direct support and information to families; and
- Ensure viability, effectiveness and impact of the organisation.

These aims are essential and ongoing. Methods of and progress towards achieving these aims are detailed in the Families Outside Business Plan and are updated annually.