Families Outside/ ROOP Family Support Work in Glasgow, North Strathclyde, Lanarkshire and South West Community Justice Authorities

Review of the First Year

Tracey Burns
Family Support Coordinator
Families Outside/ ROOP

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Introduction
In 2008 Families Outside, as part of the Routes out of Prison partnership (ROOP), identified a need for a Family Support Coordinator in the Glasgow, North Strathclyde, Lanarkshire and South West Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) to provide direct support for families affected by imprisonment. Referrals come primarily from ROOP Life Coaches from the four CJA areas. The Family Support Coordinator works with families of prisoners and ex-prisoners in supporting their family member in resettling back into the community. The support worker also identifies and helps address the needs of prisoners and their families in their own community on an outreach basis.

Initial funding for this post was secured from The Big Lottery, Scottish Prison Service and individual Community Justice Authorities, and the Family Support Coordinator was appointed in October 2008. The results presented here come from the first year of family support through ROOP, from October 2008 – September 2009.

Location
The Family Support Coordinator is primarily based at The Wise Group head office in Glasgow, seconded to the Routes out of Prison Project. The support provided is on an outreach basis, and the Family Support Coordinator travels to families in their own communities providing varied and tailored support to each individual client.

Referrals
In the first year the Family Support Coordinator had 92 referrals. All of the referrals required some element of family support; of these, 69 had issues directly relating to families with children. One-to-one support was provided in all referrals either by telephone or personal meeting, and almost all referrals highlighted more than one issue to be addressed. So far the longest period of support from the Family Support Coordinator has been one year, with the case still requiring ongoing support. The majority of clients have since been able to access services they were previously unaware of in their local communities due to the support of the Family Support Coordinator. Many of the referrals involved children being looked after by family members or within the Looked After System due to substance misuse or child protection issues. Five grandparents accessed support for themselves for the first time since their caring role began following their family member’s imprisonment, with three of the grandparents caring for more than one child.
Referral Sources
Referrals for family support come from a range of geographical areas, detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Source of referrals to the Family Support Coordinator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERRAL MONTHS</th>
<th>OCT 08</th>
<th>NOV 08</th>
<th>DEC 08</th>
<th>JAN 09</th>
<th>FEB 09</th>
<th>MAR 09</th>
<th>APR 09</th>
<th>MAY 09</th>
<th>JUNE 09</th>
<th>JULY 09</th>
<th>AUG 09</th>
<th>SEP 09</th>
<th>Team Totals</th>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
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</table>

The Family Support Coordinator receives the greatest number of referrals from the Glasgow ROOP team, closely followed by the Lanarkshire Team, as these are the areas where the largest number of families and ex-offenders require support. There are fewer referrals from North Strathclyde and South West Scotland as there are fewer prisoners being released to these areas.

Support Needs
Figure 1 below shows the range of support needs identified for the 92 referrals as well as the response to these.

Figure 1: Identified Family Support Needs & Information provided
The graph shows that Family-Related Issues, Information regarding Education, Social Work, Health, Prison and 1-1 support were the highest needs identified. Family-Related Issues included contacting Social Work on behalf of clients regarding their child or children in local authority care and supporting clients at Children’s Hearings. This type of support is often provided in addition to information regarding Education, Social Work, Health and Prison. Family Related Issues also included contacting family members where the relationship has broken down, offering support and re-establishing contact with the offender or ex-offender where appropriate. One-to-one emotional support is key for a large majority of referrals. This is provided to families on an individual outreach basis and is often the first time anyone has asked the family member how they are coping or feeling about their family member’s imprisonment. Support includes listening to what they have to say in a non-judgemental supportive way in addition to providing practical information regarding appropriate support in their own area.

The Family Support Co-ordinator works closely with local agencies establishing links, sourcing support in the family’s local area and ‘signposting’ them to the most appropriate agency, facilitating initial contact\(^1\) with organisations such as Women’s Aid, Relationships Scotland, Cruise, HOPE, Housing, Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Bureau, Kinship Care, Health, Community Addiction Teams, Education, Employment Support Agencies etc. The next sections explain some of these referrals and responses in more detail.

**Family Related Issues**

Clients have shown wide and varied family-related issues such as:

- Breakdown of relationships with family members;
- Coping with imprisonment or release from prison;
- Locating siblings in the Looked After System;
- Supporting family members in caring for offenders, ex-offenders children;
- Domestic Abuse;
- Bereavement; and
- Financial difficulties.

Nearly three-quarters of the families were from areas of deprivation and often experienced more than one of these issues. They were vulnerable and did not know their rights or what services and supports were available to them in their area. In over a half of referrals, families were affected financially due to the imprisonment. Direct support from the Family Support Coordinator in partnership with Housing, Social Work, Education and Department of Work and Pensions enabled them to make informed choices and decisions about their lives in a supportive environment.

**Provision of information**

The Family Support Coordinator tailored support to each individual family member’s needs. On 53 occasions, support related to information or support regarding contact with various statutory and voluntary agencies. This included;

- Attending meetings/reviews with Education and Social Work with client;
- Contacting Health, Prison, Social Work and Education on behalf of client;

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\(^1\) Initial contact was often via letter or telephone (noted as ‘T/C’ on the graph).
Attending Children’s Panel Hearings and Court Hearings with client providing support; and
Providing information to family members regarding Education, Social Work, Health and Prison.

One-to-one support
Each family member required one-to-one individual support, with 48 requiring this support on an ongoing basis over a period of time. To date this support has varied from four weeks to one year and included:

- Having someone to listen to and support them as individuals in a non-judgemental and ongoing basis. The prisoner or ex-prisoner is supported, but the children and families are often left to cope with everything on their own in a new and bewildering system;
- Supporting the family member or ex-offender to identify their needs and providing information regarding their rights and the various supports available to them;
- Signposting and supporting clients onto an agency where the support they will receive will be targeted to their individual needs in the long term; and
- Emotional support.

Community Partnership Working
The Family Support Coordinator worked in partnership with local agencies such as Women’s Aid, Cruise Bereavement, Social Work, Relationships Scotland, Mediation, Carers Centres, the Department of Work and Pensions, and Health & Education to enable family members achieve the best possible outcomes. Examples of partnership working include the following:

- A mother whose son was in prison was extremely distressed as a result of his impending release from prison, as he had previously been violent and abusive towards her. The mother discussed this with the Family Support Coordinator who initiated contact with the prison, arranging a meeting with the prison-based Social Worker and the Family Contact Officer. The prisoner enrolled in an anger management programme, and a referral was made to Housing Support within the prison to address the prisoner’s housing issues prior to his release.
- A grandmother was the main carer for her grandchild as his father was continually in and out of prison. The grandmother experienced health issues of her own as well as financial hardship as a result of providing for her grandchild from her state pension. The Family Support Worker was able to support the client in applying for Kinship Care Allowance, accessing a support group as well as a referral to the local Princess Royal Trust for Carers Young Carers Project for her grandson. This provided access to individual support for her grandson and a break from her caring role as well as providing her grandson the opportunity to take part in outings and to meet other young people in a similar situation as himself.
- The Family Support Coordinator supported a man whose partner had recently been released from prison but died, to organise and pay for her funeral. The man was in receipt of benefits and had no means to pay for and arrange a funeral. Support was provided through an application to the Funeral Fund from the Social Fund to pay for the funeral, and a suitable Funeral Director was sourced who would accept this method of payment. Contact was also made with the Criminal Justice Social Work to access a Crisis Loan for the client to purchase essential clothing to attend the funeral.
- An ex-offender who had recently been released from prison and was working with a ROOP Community Life Coach requested support to re-establish his relationship with his father. The client’s father had been his main and consistent support throughout his imprisonment and through other various issues. The Family Support Co-ordinator contacted the father to offer
support with his issues and to discuss the possibility of reconciliation with his son. The father and son began rebuilding their relationship by texting each other, and then progressed to talking on the telephone and finally meeting in a neutral place enabling them to move forward.

The role of the Family Support Coordinator is continually evolving, and links with local services are an essential and ongoing area of development.

**Routes out of Prison (ROOP) Project**

As the Family Support Coordinator is seconded to the ROOP project, 98% of referrals have come through Community or Prison Life Coaches from each of the four Community Justice Authority (CJA) areas where the ROOP project is available (Glasgow, Lanarkshire, North Strathclyde and South West Scotland). The Prison Life Coaches are usually based within a prison Links Centre and receive their referrals via the PR2 (Prisoner Records 2) computer database utilised in prisons. The prisoner will meet with the Prison Life Coach (PLC) and sign up to the ROOP Project. Their referral will then be distributed to one of the four CJA areas, where a Community Life Coach will then be assigned to support them. A family member can be identified at any time during this process, at which point a referral will be made to the Family Support Coordinator.

A key part of the Family Support Coordinators role is to liaise with prison staff, in particular Family Contact Officers within each prison. This contact is frequent within each prison Links Centre supported by the PLC on a monthly basis. The prisons accessed are HMPs Addiewell, Cornton Vale, Barlinnie, Kilmarnock, Greenock and HMYOI Polmont. This also enables Family Support Coordinator to develop and maintain links with the various agencies that work with offenders and ex-offenders in each prison area, promoting the Family Support resource to other agencies.

The Family Support Coordinator participates in the ROOP Family Group Meeting held quarterly in HMP Barlinnie. Staff from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), ROOP, Families Outside and Relationships Scotland attends this meeting, which provides the opportunity to raise issues and concerns families have at a strategic level. SPS Programme Staff in HMP Barlinnie, in partnership with Relationships Scotland, have piloted and developed a relationship programme that includes both prisoners and their partners. This programme is specifically tailored to their needs and circumstances, and continued support is available after release from prison.

The support of prison staff has been invaluable to the Family Support Coordinator’s role, and in partnership with them she has attended Family Induction and Family Contact days and events within HMYOI Polmont, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Kilmarnock. Family Induction in these prisons is directed at families of first-time offenders and their families and is usually delivered within the first two weeks of imprisonment. Some prisons also host Family Contact Days, designed for the whole family. Prison staff go to great lengths to make this day an enjoyable experience for the whole family, providing activities such as bouncy castles and face painting in addition to light refreshments for the families.

**Promotion of the service**

As well as providing a direct service to families, the Family Support Coordinator attends events, seminars and training to promote this resource to partner agencies. Liaison and partnership working with agencies within the four CJA areas such as Children & Families and Criminal Justice Social Work, Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Facilities, health workers, education teams and so on have been a
critical element of effective support of families with someone in prison. Reports for various funders as well as promotion of the service through a ROOP DVD have also raised awareness both of the service and of the need for support for families.

Uptake of family support through ROOP in its first year was almost double the projected level of 50 families per year. Referrals for the first quarter of the second year have double this figure again (49 referrals in the first quarter alone), not least due to more active engagement of ROOP in a number of the prisons. Data from the first year have been used both to report on need and appropriate response but also to adapt the use of the database to record and report these needs more clearly. Further information will therefore be available at the end of the second year in September 2010.