



voicing the needs
of families affected
by imprisonment

Families Outside in Fife

In July 2014, Families Outside began working in partnership with Fife Council to support families affected by imprisonment. The Regional & Family Support Coordinator for Families Outside began building links with local organisations, and, in partnership with key contacts within Fife Council, raising the profile of Families Outside, particularly within the education sector.

Referrals

To date, the Regional & Family Support Coordinator (Fife & Forth Valley) has received 21 referrals:

Referral Type	Referral Source	Area	Prison	Number of Children / Young People Affected
Family	Helpline	Rosyth	Addiewell	1
Family	Perth Prison Visitors Centre	Dunfermline	Perth	0
Family	Helpline	Kirkcaldy	Glenochil	3
Family	Helpline	Alloa	Glenochil	0
Family	Helpline	Kennoway	Edinburgh	1
Family	School	Glenrothes	Perth	2
Child	School	Glenrothes	England	1
Family	SACRO	Kennoway	Edinburgh	2
Family	Helpline	Dunfermline	On Bail	0
Family	Helpline	Stirling	Barlinie	1
Child	Self	Kennoway	Edinburgh	1
Head Teacher	Self	Dunfermline	N/A	1
Head Teacher	Self	Glenrothes	Perth	1
Guidance Teacher	Self	Glenrothes	N/A	1
Inclusion Worker	Self	Dunfermline	Polmont	1
Social Worker	Self	Kirkcaldy	N/A	1
Nursery Teacher	Self	Leven	N/A	2
Young Person	Self	Dunfermline	Glenochil	1
Family	FACST	Kirkcaldy	Not known yet	1
Child	School	Dunfermline	On Bail	1
Family	Nursery	Methil	Not known yet	1

Issues

Here are some of the issues which have been raised by professionals and families:

Concerns about children	Concerns about prisoner	Education
Emotional support	Domestic abuse	Travelling to a prison
Financial worries	Prison visits	Family Relationships
Anger Management	Health and Wellbeing	Dealing with complex crimes

The work of the Regional & Family Support Coordinator to address these issues is best demonstrated by the case studies below (all names have been changed):

Case Study 1

The Baker Family comprises Karen (mother), David (father), Sophie (11), Melanie (9) and Simon (5). Karen called the Families Outside helpline and asked for support from a Family Support Coordinator. Over a year ago, David had been given a custodial sentence of 10 years for sexual and violent offences, leaving Karen on her own to raise 3 children and having to deal with the aftermath of the sentencing. Karen was feeling isolated, traumatised, and emotionally drained. The local children and families social work team was involved, looking at contact between the children and their father and whether or not this was deemed appropriate (there were no legal restrictions in place).

When the Regional & Family Support Coordinator became involved, it became clear that the process of determining whether or not the children should have contact with their father had stagnated over the year that David had already spent in prison, and this had resulted in the children acting up and blaming Karen.

The work that the Regional & Family Support Coordinator has carried out includes:

- regular meetings with Karen;
- communicating with the children and families social work team, resulting in a new social worker being allocated to move things along;
- attending meetings with Karen and the social worker to ensure that Karen understands the systems and processes involved;
- setting up meetings with the school to discuss how they can support the children and offering ideas about how David could be involved in the children's education;

- liaising with Fife Sports and Leisure Trust to secure a free leisure card for the family in order for them to remain active, whilst giving some financial relief for Karen;
- applying for funding for a much needed washing machine;
- supporting Karen at an Integration Case Management meeting at the prison regarding David's sentence management; and
- making a referral to Woman's Aid for Karen, who is now engaging with a support worker, and for Melanie, who is engaging with a children's worker.

Although Karen still feels isolated, it is hoped that a planned joint meeting with all the professionals involved will help. The social worker is currently compiling a report to be sent to the children's reporter, which will propose that a children's rights organisation works with the children to determine their views about contact with their father. It is hoped that this will lead to a decision regarding contact between the children and David. The Regional & Family Support Coordinator will continue to support this family until they are in a stable position.

Case Study 2

Mark (12) was referred to the Regional & Family Support Coordinator by his Guidance Teacher who had concerns about the deterioration in Mark's behaviour. Mark's father is in prison, and Mark has not seen him for a number of years; there is no contact between Mark's family and his imprisoned father. The Regional & Family Support Coordinator met Mark on a one-to-one basis at the school to discuss how he is feeling. Mark stated that he would like to have contact with his father but doesn't know which prison he is in and when he will be released.

After a couple of sessions, it was agreed that the next session would involve Mark's mother, Moira. At this session, with the Guidance Teacher present as well, Moira had come prepared with a list of things that she wanted to share with Mark; talking honestly and openly about Mark's father's imprisonment was something that they had never done before. Mark broke down and became very emotional about the situation, and Moira felt relieved to be able to express her feelings with Mark. Moira was adamant that she did not want to have contact with Mark's father but understood that Mark had unanswered questions and needed support to move forward. When we explored with Mark what would help him move on, he said it would be just to know if he could have contact with his father or not.

Moira agreed that the Regional & Family Support Coordinator could find out if it was a possibility; it was made clear that no other action would happen other than finding out if it was yes or no, and Mark was happy with this as a first step. After the joint meeting, Mark spoke with the Regional & Family Support Coordinator and said he found the session with his mother useful as they don't talk about things at home and hardly spend time together. He acknowledged why it is difficult for his mother to talk about what has happened and doesn't blame her for anything.

This piece of work shows that Mark trusts and is happy to open up to the Regional and Family Support Coordinator. The Regional & Family Support Coordinator is currently looking into the situation with the local social work team. The Guidance Teacher has reported that Mark's behaviour has settled down over the last month.

These case studies give an insight to the work that is being carried out by the Regional & Family Support Coordinator and why it is so important to give people the support and space to express their feelings and to encourage them to act upon what they feel in order to move forward. One family commented how she felt the support from Families Outside has benefited her

"Families Outside is a great service for families who has a loved one in prison. I have benefited from this service because since they have got involved with my family, we have moved forward with the social services and got things sorted with the children's school. They were able to help me with funding for a washing machine, which was much appreciated."

Partnership Working

When Families Outside started to work in partnership with Fife Council, it was agreed that the Regional & Family Support Coordinator would be based with the Family and Community Support Team in the Dunfermline office one day per week. Following a recent meeting with the 3 FACST Integration Managers, we have decided that the Regional & Family Support Coordinator will spend 2 hours every fortnight with each of the 3 teams. This will help to create stronger links with each of the teams and will give staff, in particular the Family Workers, an opportunity to discuss any issues around imprisonment they have with families they are working with. This will also create opportunities for the Regional & Family Support Coordinator to receive support from the FACST staff. Already, this arrangement has led to an increase of referrals and a greater sense of partnership working.

Training, Raising Awareness, and New Developments

During the first two months of the Regional & Family Support Coordinator being in post, much time was spent meeting community-based agencies and raising awareness of Families Outside. This will be an ongoing process.

A CPD teacher training event took place at HMP Glenochil in November 2014, and we are looking to hold another one in May 2015. As well as teachers' comments, which clearly show that the CPD sessions have an enormous impact, the following email from a teacher who

attended the HMP Glenochil session demonstrates how this impact translates into action, which in turn improves support for families:

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

In addition, Families Outside contributed to the Child Protection aspect of the Fife probationary teacher's course and highlighted the issues for children and young people affected by imprisonment. The Regional & Family Support Coordinator will be looking at how this work can be developed.

Fife Council is keen to be involved in a new initiative whereby parents' evenings with imprisoned parents can be conducted using video conferencing. We had begun this process with a father in HMP Addiewell but were unable to undertake a parent / teacher meeting due to the father being released on home detention curfew. However, the Regional & Family Support Coordinator will liaise with prisons and professionals to identify another appropriate family in Fife.

Summary

In conclusion, the partnership between Families Outside and Fife Council has already resulted in families affected by imprisonment being supported and the professionals around them feeling more confident in understanding the issues. We have had interest from other local authorities who are keen to develop a similar model because they recognise that this model of working makes sense. We look forward to developing our partnership with Fife Council further over the coming months.

Kerry Knox, March 2015