



Families Outside
Addiewell Visitors' Centre Team

April 2014 – March 2015

Making Families
the Centre
of Attention



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"Families Outside have been very helpful in explaining situations to me and have been a great support when I've struggled and needed someone to talk to."

Visitors' Centre Team - who we are

Families Outside is the only national organisation in Scotland that works exclusively on behalf of families affected by imprisonment. The Visitors' Centre at HMP Addiewell is a key contributor to one of three targets in our Strategic Aims: to provide and increase direct support and information to families.

Visiting a loved one in prison can be a very stressful time for families. Providing a quality Visitors' Centre where families can go for support can help alleviate stress by providing practical and emotional support for the families. Families Outside and HMP Addiewell have been working together since January 2013 to provide a dedicated Visitors' Centre which focuses on the needs of families.

The centre is located within the perimeter of the prison in the waiting area for visitors. This unique position allows the visitors' centre staff to meet with visitors as they book in for their visit and as they leave after a visit. Therefore, the staff are always available to offer practical and emotional support to visitors before and after visits, which means the centre can be extremely busy at times. The centre is open 7 days a week including Monday to Friday evenings.



An important characteristic of a quality Visitors' Centre is a staff complement that is consistent, dedicated, welcoming, and understands the needs of families. Families Outside has been extremely fortunate to employ staff who are dedicated to supporting families but also have a wealth of knowledge and experience they can bring to the centre ensuring a quality service for visitors. Families Outside employs a Manager who has the responsibility of operating the centre building good relationships with the prison and the community. We also have a part-time Family Support Coordinator/Visitor Centre Worker who supports families both in the centre and out in the community, and two part-time Visitor Centre Workers who support families within the centre. In addition we have three dedicated sessional workers who provide cover for staff holidays and sickness.

Jenny White	Visitors' Centre Manager	Part time
Dawn Henderson	Family Support Coordinator/Visitors' Centre Worker	Part time
Lee Shaw	Visitors' Centre Worker	Part time
Donna Campbell	Visitors' Centre Worker	Part time
Stacy Morgan	Sessional Worker	Part time
Sharon Mercado	Sessional Worker	Part time
Caroline McKay	Sessional Worker	Part time

Volunteers - their role, their value

Volunteers work in the centre alongside a paid member of staff providing support and information to visitors. Volunteers can:

Meet and greet visitors	Provide a hot drink
Provide basic visits information/signpost	Clean/tidy the area
Spend time listening and talking to family members/visitors	Play with the children
Assist with visiting organisations	Administration

The recruitment of volunteers for the Visitors' Centre follows a set path, as detailed below:



In 2014-2015 we worked with 10 volunteers, and in March 2015 we trained another 4 volunteers. All the volunteers are friendly and helpful, and they can build a good rapport with the visitors. One little girl saw the same volunteer every week, and over time they built a good relationship. They had a common interest in 'loom bands', and the little girl made a bracelet which she brought in and gave to the volunteer.

Volunteering can help the volunteer gain valuable knowledge, skills, and experience needed to secure employment. One of our volunteers, Thomas Leonard, experienced this first hand when he secured employment with Sodexo.

What We Do

HMP Addiewell is an all-male prison set in a rural location within West Lothian, serving Lanarkshire and West Lothian courts. About 70% of prisoners come from Lanarkshire, 26% from West Lothian, and the remaining population coming from other areas throughout Scotland and some from England. Due to the location of HMP Addiewell, links to the prison by public transport, although regular, are not frequent, with one train an hour which can make travelling to the prison an ordeal for some visitors.

The majority of the visitors are female (about 84%) and often attend with children, who can be tired after a long journey usually involving both bus and train. The Visitors' Centre is designed to provide a warm, welcoming environment where visitors can relax and take some time to themselves with friendly staff who are on hand to support the visitor where needed. There is also a play area for the children, a library with books for children and adults along with literature on various support for families. The staff can provide independent support, information and guidance including:

- Support First Time Visitors
- General prison information
- ID requirements
- Visiting times
- Signposting to other organisations
- Assistance with Assisted Prison Visitor Scheme (APVU) applications (travel costs)
- Completion of APVU confirmation of visit
- Assistance with applications for Citizen Cards
- Contribution to New Prisoner Induction
- Contribution to Family Inductions
- Provision of emotional and practical support to families
- Telephone support
- A bridge between the family, the prison and the community

Families of prisoners often experience stigma and discrimination, can have multiple and complex problems, and may not know where to turn. By offering a professional service at the Visitors' Centre, Families Outside can support families to help them find ways to resolve their issues which can make life easier for the family while their loved one is in prison.

“Just to say, thank you for everything you do, every week you are always smiling and I thank you for all your help and smiles, x”

Calendar of events

April 2014		October 2014	
1-31	Carried out Travel survey with Visitors	1	Oral Health Team in centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice
1	In-Tune workshop	2	Family Community Induction - Hamilton
5	In-Tune Performance during Bonding Visits	12	Advice Shop attend during Money Week
9	Oral Health Team in centre to give out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice	20-24	ICM Week in Centre
11	Easter Treasure Hunt for Children	November 2014	
17	Conflict Resolution Training by Edinburgh Cyrenians	1	In Tune taster session during Bonding Visits
29	Session 2 of In-Tune starts for 8weeks	11	Session 3 of In-Tune workshops
May 2014		18	Session 3 of In-Tune workshops
6	In-Tune workshops	19	CPD event for Teachers
13	Action on Depression workshop	21	Visitors Forum
13	In-Tune workshops	25	Session 3 of In-Tune workshops
20	In-Tune workshops	27	Conflict resolution Training by Edinburgh Cyrenians
27	In-Tune workshops	December 2014	
June 2014		2	In-Tune workshops
4	Oral Health in centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice	9	In-Tune workshops
7	West Lothian Advice shop had a stall in the centre	15	Start handing out selection boxes and presents to children
8	In Tune performance at Bonding Visits	16	In-Tune workshops
9	June CPD event for Teachers	20	Christmas Party including In Tune Performance
11	Oral Health Team in the centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice	January 2015	
July 2014		7	Oral Health Team in centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice
1	Visitors' forum	February 2015	
9	Oral Health in centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice	26	Family Community Induction – Airdrie
27	West Lothian Advice shop had a stall in the centre	March 2015	
August 2014		17	Volunteer Training in Livingston
2	Family Fun Day including storyteller and Arts and Crafts	24	Volunteer Training in Livingston
20	Oral Health Team in centre giving out toothbrushes, toothpaste and advice	31	Volunteer Training in Livingston

Children and family activities

The Monthly Art Competition is always a great success, and during the year we have tried to coincide with different themes of the year. At Easter the children designed their own Easter Eggs, and in July we asked the children to draw their favourite sport to reflect the Commonwealth Games. The children are always excited to see if they have won a prize, and one little boy asked his mum to bring him to the prison outside of their normal visit to collect his prize. He ran out to the car with his prize in his hands, calling to his mum that he had won; he was so pleased, and it was great to be able to share in his excitement.

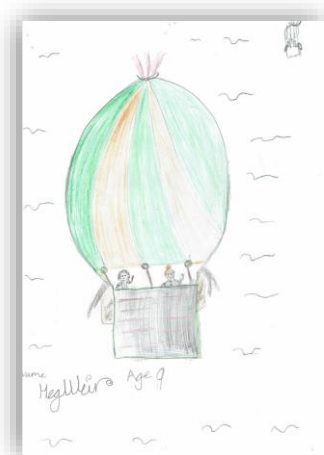
During Easter the area was decorated with Easter bunnies and eggs, and we held a 'Treasure Hunt' for the children where they had to follow clues around the centre. We had various items displayed such as wellingtons and books as part of the hunt. Following the clues led the children to the Easter Bunny who gave them an Easter egg. One mother commented that her children were not interested in talking to their dad, whom they were there to visit, as they were so eager to do the treasure hunt – not quite what we'd intended!

Edinburgh Cyrenians held two different workshops for families on 'conflict resolution'. The families attending really enjoyed the workshop and said they had learned a lot.

Action on Depression also held a workshop for families on how to spot the signs of depression and how you can help yourself. The families attending said they felt really relaxed during the session and enjoyed meeting the trainer and other families. Notably they all said that the best part about the day was peer support, and some of them swapped phone numbers so they could keep in touch.

The family Fun Day in August was well-received by all families attending, and Families Outside provided an Arts and Crafts table where families were encouraged to create their own Coat of Arms. At one point the two tables were bursting with activity, with even the surrounding floor space being used. At the end of the day there were prizes for the children for best in their age group.

At Halloween the centre was decorated with all things creepy. There were spiders and their webs, pumpkins, and ghosts running amok. The children loved the display, and the art competition for October was on this theme. Children visiting the prison on the 31st were given a 'goodie bag' so they didn't miss out on 'trick or treat'.



"Absolutely fantastic, even though a long way to travel" (Mum)

'In Tune', our joint project with Vox Liminis, brought families affected by imprisonment together through interactive musical sessions facilitated by professional musicians and supported by Vox Liminis and Families Outside. The project worked with 12 fathers, 14 carers and 17 children over 3 separate blocks of 8 sessions each. The families really enjoyed being able to work together.

"I'm going to my local toddler groups during the week now, and they do music there" (Mum)

I enjoyed it.... It definitely makes a difference for the kids" (Dad)

"It was good for socialising" (Mum)

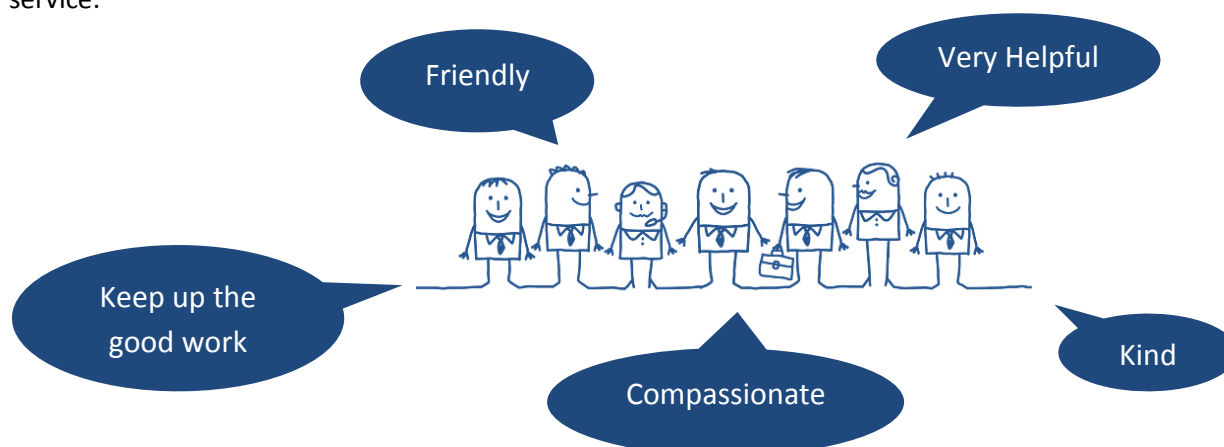


Christmas is always a busy time of year, and this was reflected in the work at the centre, which was decorated with a Christmas theme. The children visiting over the two weeks up to Christmas were given a selection box by the prison and a present from Families Outside, most of which were donated from a local Lanarkshire church. Visitors commented on the happy atmosphere and that the children had not been forgotten. The musicians from the In Tune Project played Christmas songs at the Christmas party on 20th December, and the children and mums who had taken part were given a present.

On Mother's Day the children made key rings to give to their mums and wrapped them in tissue paper, ready for the Sunday morning.

Travel Survey

The Visitors' Centre has now been open for over a year, and we wanted to ask visitors if they had used the facilities at the centre but also if they had any suggestions on how the centre could be improved. 58% of visitors said they had used the facilities, with 9% stating that, although they hadn't used the service, they commented on the friendliness of the staff and the information provided for families of prisoners. 85% of visitors said they would not like us to offer more services within the centre. The last question asked visitors if they would like to comment on the centre, and below are some of the words they used to describe the service:



Diary of a Family Support Coordinator/Visitors' Centre Worker

- 9.30 am Arrive at the centre for the start of a day's work and meet families at Librite who are waiting on their loved ones being released.
- 10.00am Leave the centre to meet with New Routes Worker for a family visit.
- 10.30am Meet with family in their home in the community to provide practical and emotional support.
- 12.00pm Leave family to come back to centre.
- 12.30pm Arrive back at centre, and the receptionist gives me a message to phone a family who are looking for information. Collect keys for the office, and as I am unlocking the door, the phone is ringing. I manage to answer the phone while dropping my bag and coat on the seat. The call is from a family calling regarding their step-daughter who tried to take her own life after receiving a phone call from a prisoner. I spoke to the family for a while to reassure them, then I contacted the Duty Operations Manager regarding the call.
- 1.00pm While trying to get my lunch at the same time as reading emails and handover sheets, a family comes into the office. They are first time visitors. I speak to them for a while about prison procedures, family induction, secure payment service, assisted prison visiting scheme, and Families Outside.
- 1.40pm Visitors start booking in, and while they are waiting to go up to the visits hall, they come into the office for various help (tokens/APVU stamped/general information/first time visit).
- 1.50pm Manage to speak to the front of house staff, who inform me there are 74 visits this afternoon.
- 2.00pm Families start to go up to their visits.
- 2.10pm A gentleman comes out of searching area, shouting and starting to strip. The sniffer dog has indicated that he has had contact with drugs, and he has been told by staff that he will only be allowed a closed visit [a visit separated by glass]. He is not happy and insists that he does not take drugs and continues to take his clothes off. I speak to the gentleman in a calm voice, asking him to think about what he is doing. Eventually he stops what he is doing and listens to me. We talk for a while, and he calms down. He does not want the closed visit and decides it is best if he goes home. He thanks me for speaking to him calmly, as he said that he is not sure what would have happened. I am just glad that a potentially volatile situation has been averted and that he can continue to visit his son in the future.
- 2.40pm Family came into the centre crying: their son just been convicted, and they are all in shock. While speaking to them, another two families interrupt me, wanting advice and help.
- 3.00pm There is a quiet minute, and I manage to log on to the computer to check emails and daily handover, but before I manage to read anything, another family comes in, as they have been refused a visit due to the dog indicating a scent of drugs and are upset. The family are insistent that they do not take drugs. I explain to the family what an indication means, and after calming them down, they decide to take a closed visit, as they want to see their son.
- 3.10pm A young mum comes down from a visit, as she needs to feed her 2-day old baby. She was told she was not allowed to do this in the Visits Hall. I bring her into the office and let her feed the baby in quiet; once she finishes feeding the baby, she goes back up for a visit. The 'front of house' prison staff were extremely helpful and understanding.

- 3.20pm Some children come into the office to show me the pictures they have drawn, and they want me to put their pictures up on the wall for the monthly art competition.
- 3.30pm Family Induction is on today, so I go through to the Tribunal Suite to speak to the families and prisoners who are attending. Attending Inductions allows us to speak directly to the prisoners and their families about the support that is available.
- 4.00pm An ex-prisoner comes in looking for the cashier.
- 4.10pm A family come in, upset after their visit as the prisoner has told them that he is feeling suicidal and at the end of his tether. The mother is extremely upset; I reassure her that I will speak to the hall manager
- 4.30pm When the family leave, I ring Hall Manager to alert him to the concerns of the family regarding the prisoner.
- 4.40pm Family rings in, upset as they need to cancel the visit for tomorrow as the father of the prisoner has been taken ill. Reassure mum and ask her to cancel by calling the booking line, but we will try and get a message to her son.
- 4.50pm Family comes into the office after their visit; the mum is on crutches, and her daughter has two young children in a double buggy, and they need to get to the station. I spend time trying to get a taxi to take the family to the station, but there is not a taxi available that is big enough to take the whole family, so the mum has to get in the taxi, and the daughter pushes the buggy up to the station.
- 5.00pm Head of Art from the education department in the prison comes in to ask if she can store some paintings in our office which are being collected for an exhibition out in the community.
- 5.05pm A family comes in after their visit, asking when the next train is. We tell them that it is at 6.06pm. They ask if they can stay in the area as it is raining. Make them tea and coffee while they wait.
- 5.20pm While trying to write the daily handover, I receive a phone call from a woman who is very upset, as her husband has just been convicted at court and she doesn't know what to do. Reassure her that we are here to help and provide her with information on visiting prison. She is extremely worried, as all the welfare benefits are in her husband's name and therefore will cease. How was she going to pay the bills and feed the kids? Explain to her that we can help through a partnership with Citizens' Advice in her area, and with her permission we can ask them to give her a call and make a home visit to talk to her. She is relieved with all the information that we gave her and thanks us for our time.

"The end of afternoon visiting and my day at work. Although it is the end of my working day and time to go home, it is the beginning of an evening's work for the Visitors' Centre Worker who is due in to cover the visits tonight."

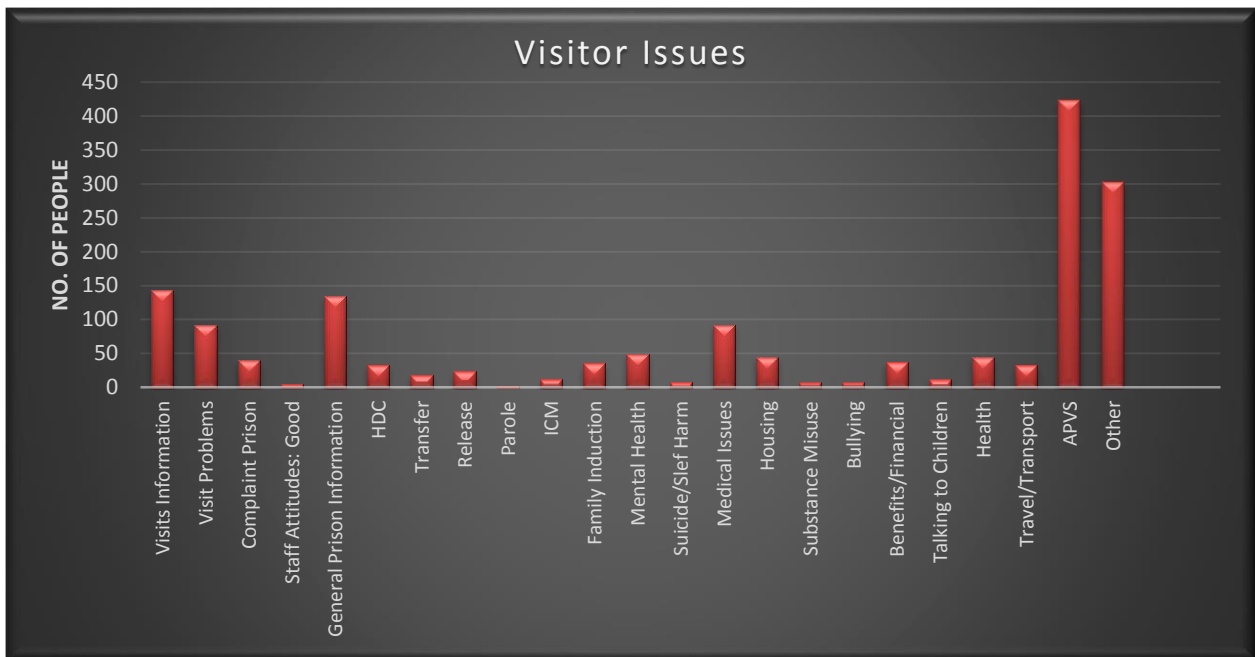
Family Support Coordinator/Visitors' Centre Worker

A year in statistics (2014-2015)

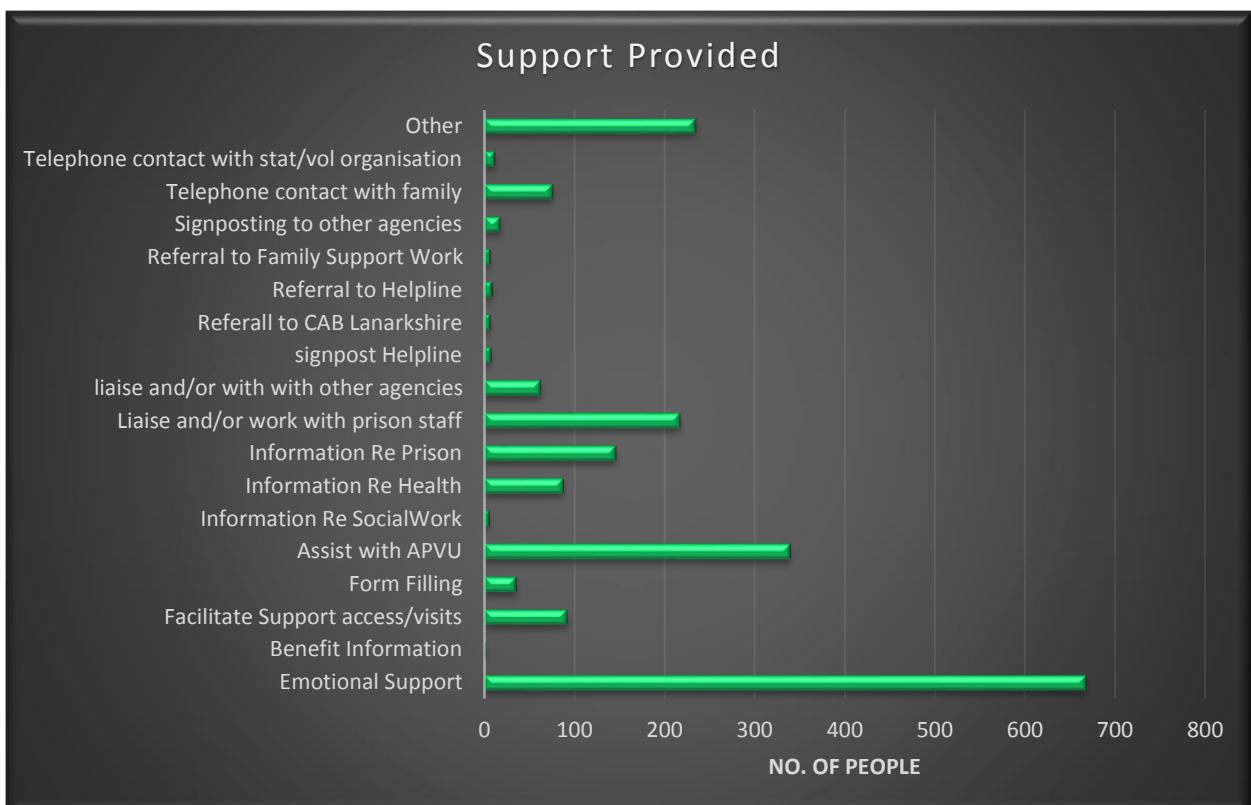


“Staff are tremendous, really helpful and understanding. I don’t have anyone else to speak to due to family breakdown thank you for your time.”

Visitors to the prison can present with various issues, with the most common relating to the cost of travel and transport (APVU). The staff are equipped to deal with visitors in a respectful and non-judgemental manner, providing the information or signposting to organisations that can provide the support needed.



We walk the journey alongside the family while their loved one is in prison providing support whether emotional, financial, or practical, as they need it. Emotional support is by far the most common – and necessary – way we help families. The graph below demonstrates the additional support we provided to families in 2014-2015:



Two different families' journeys through the centre

Family 1

Sheila (names have been changed to protect the individual) first came to the centre in March. She had travelled from a town in Lanarkshire and was really upset that her partner was on remand, but to add to this, it was also her first time in a prison. We gave her information on the prison (Family Handbook), spoke about what happens on a visit i.e. booking, searching, going up to the visit hall, and putting in property for the prisoner. We also talked about prisoner induction and family induction and asked if she would like us to put her name down for family induction. Sheila was on benefits due to her health, so we also discussed the financial implications of visiting the prison and advised her of the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme, showed her how to complete the application form, and stamped the 'confirmation of a visit' form. Sheila spoke about her emotional and health issues which were not being helped by the fact she has to go to court as a witness against her partner, which she did not want to do.

On Sheila's second visit to the centre, we spoke with both her and her step-dad about how she was feeling. She was still very apprehensive about visiting the prison but felt that she could speak to us about her worries. Her step-dad had brought her to the prison, as he was worried about how Sheila would feel about travelling to the prison on her own on public transport. Her step-dad also has health issues, and because of this he could not bring Sheila to the prison the next day. She was really worried about the times of the train, where the station was, and how she would cope with the journey, as it involved a bus and two trains, or a long bus journey and one train. We spoke with her and gave her a timetable for the trains, saying which train she should catch to make sure she arrived on time and pointed out where the station was and told her to come and see us when she arrived.

The next day, Sheila managed the journey and came and spoke with us as soon as she arrived at the centre. She was early for her visit but was pleased that she had managed the journey. We spoke for a while, and Sheila talked about how hard she was finding life with her partner on remand. She talked about how they helped each other and that she was worried about his health and how he was coping without her, taking his medication etc. We assured her that the NHS would look after his health concerns and that we were here to support her. We asked if she had any help back home, and she said that she had no one to speak with and often felt down and lonely. We told her about a workshop that we were running in May which was being organised by Action on Depression, and she said she would like to attend. We then spoke about how we could help in the meantime and asked her permission to speak with Action on Depression about possible groups in her area, which she agreed would be beneficial to her. A couple of days later we phoned Sheila about some support groups in her area and had a chat about how she was feeling. Sheila said she would contact the groups, but in the meantime she had contacted her doctor and had an appointment to see him. We told her we would call her in a few days to see how she was if we didn't see her at the centre.

Sheila continued to come to the centre when visiting her partner, and at the beginning of April Sheila spoke with me about receiving a letter regarding a meeting with an officer in relation to her benefits. She was really worried, as she did not know what it was about. We spoke for a while, and we asked if she would like us to contact the Advice Shop to give her a call and some advice about the letter, which she said would be good. We told her we would contact her in a couple of days to see how she was and how she got on at her meeting about the benefits. When we spoke to Sheila two days later, she said that the Advice Shop had called her and that the meeting had gone well. She had in fact been told that, due to her health issues, she was entitled to more benefits and that they would assist her to apply for them. Sheila continued to come to see us every time she visited the centre to talk and also to get her APV form signed, but she still has health issues and needs continuous emotional support.

At the beginning of May we phoned Sheila about the Action on Depression workshop, and her partner answered the phone. Sheila seemed a lot happier. I spoke about the workshop and asked if she would still like to come along. She said that she would love to attend but that her mother was not well at that moment. She asked if we would let her know if we were running any other events, as she would really like to attend. She thanked us for all our support while her partner was in prison. Her partner asked to speak with me, and he also thanked me as he was not sure how Sheila would have coped without the support we gave her over the months while he was on remand. Sheila said that he is getting support from SACRO which is really helping him, so we wished them well and said that we hoped we would not see them again.

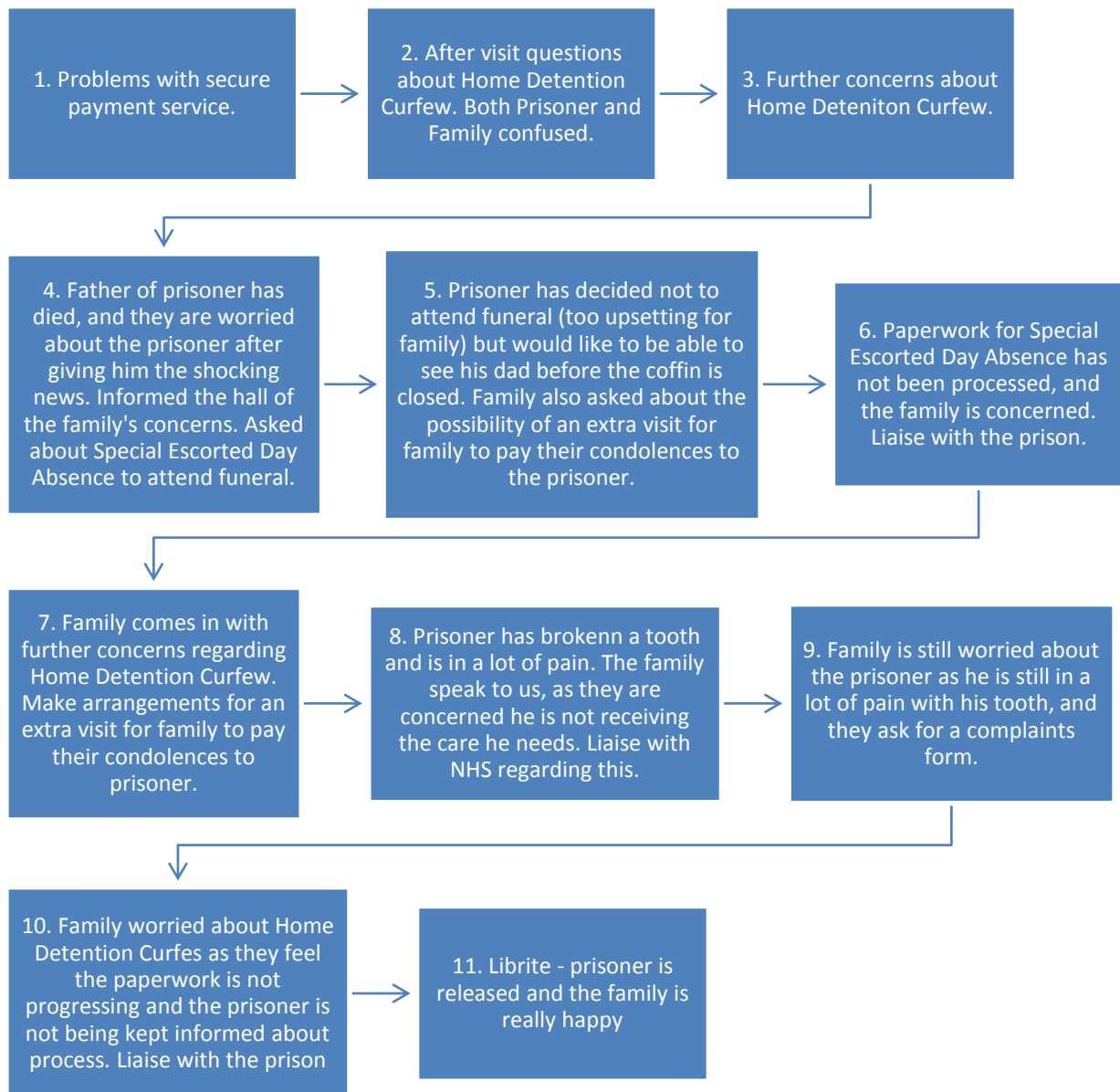
We worked with the family over a 3-month period.

“Just wanted to say ‘thank you’ for all your advice and help during this difficult time. I couldn’t have emotionally coped without your support every week, and very much appreciate everything you could have done for me.”

(Wife of prisoner)

Family 2

We worked with the family over a 4-month period face-to-face and through telephone support.



Every family that we work with in the centre has different needs at different times, while their loved one is in prison. Our role within the Visitors' Centre is to walk alongside that family whether the prisoner has a short- or long-term sentence, providing emotional, practical support and guidance.

"To the wonderful girls @Families Outside. Many thanks for your time & help you do a great job and the reassurances that you gave me were a relief & a great help."

(Family Member)

Partnership Working

With the Prison

The relationship between the prison and the family is important, and by liaising with the prison on behalf of the families we help to bridge the gap. We also take part in Prisoner and Family Inductions to let them know what support is available. We gave independent advice and support to over 1,000 families whilst working within the constraints of the prison.

To enable the centre to build good relationships with the prison, we invited prison staff from different areas of the prison to come and talk to our staff at our monthly team meeting. Staff from the following departments have attended: Cashiers (regarding prisoner's money), NHS, Integrated Case Management, Home Detention Curfew, Librite, and Security. This has allowed our team to gain a greater insight and therefore provide quality support to families.

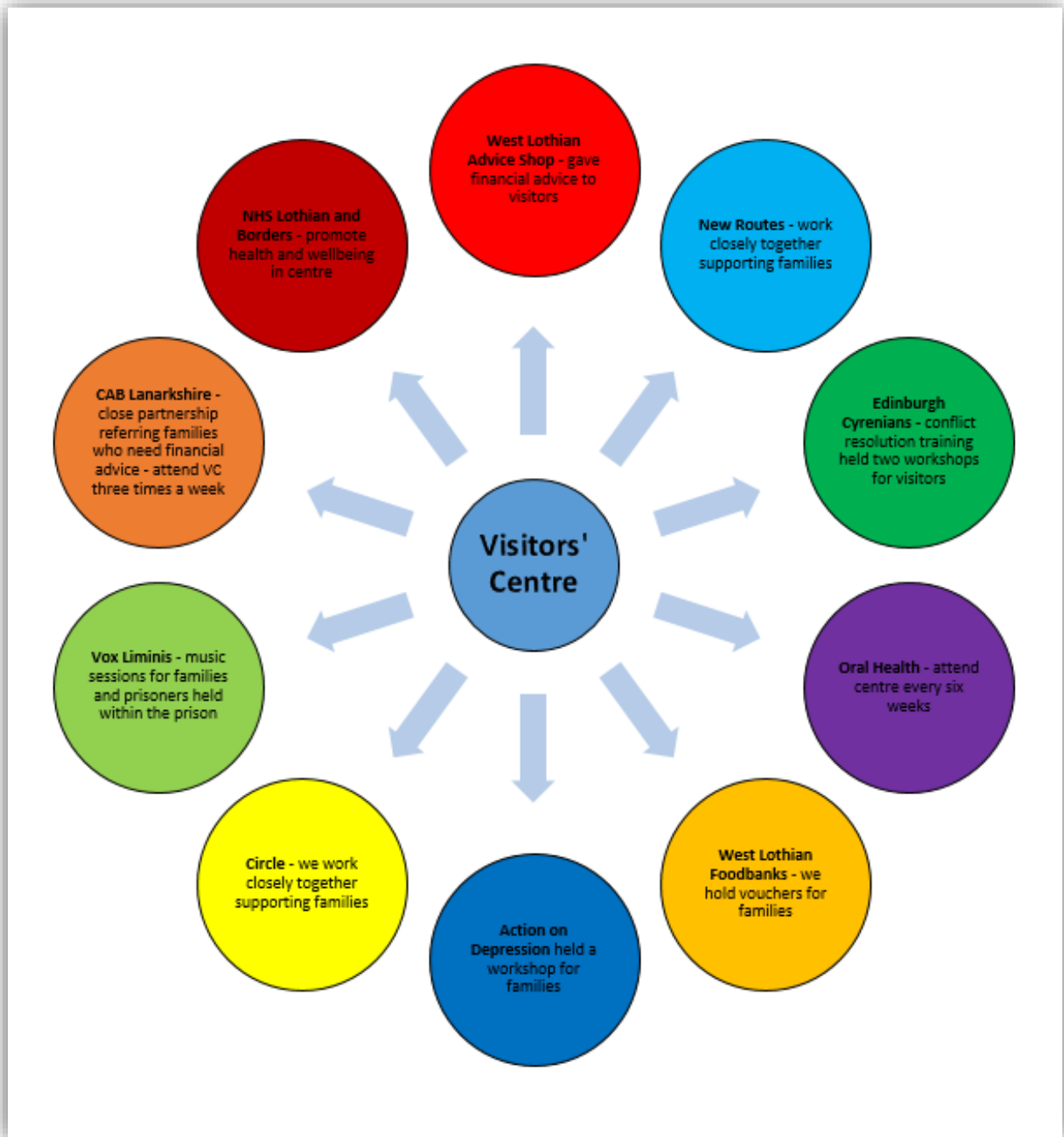


The Visitors' Centre team maintains a close, positive relationship with the staff at HMP Addiewell, feeding in to the prison's bi-monthly Child & Family Strategy Group as well as a monthly Families Working Group and Diversity & Inclusion meetings. Our relationship with the prison staff means that the Visitors' Centre engages with any campaigns or awareness-raising events that take place within the prison; we displayed artwork within the centre for the 70th anniversary of Auschwitz, International Woman's Day, and a display for Easter to name a few. The staff have also attended 'Celebrating Success' events and Rabbin Burns Lunch.

"Thanks for all your help and all our little chats; it made my visits easier knowing you were there if I needed a chat."

Community Organisations

The centre has forged links with outside agencies to provide continuing support for families in the community. We work with a range of community organisations, as detailed below:



Citizen Advice Bureau Lanarkshire

In October 2014 we applied in partnership with Citizen Advice Bureau Lanarkshire (CAB) to the Scottish Legal Aid Board for a joint initiative to provide financial advice and support to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and the families of prisoners within the Lanarkshire area. This project provides financial advice and support to families of prisoners through office-based appointments, home appointments, and advice clinics at the Visitors' Centre with the options of a follow-up appointment.

One family phoned the Visitors' Centre after leaving the court, extremely upset. They had never been through the criminal justice system before. The husband had just been convicted of an offence, and they did not know where to turn. The wife was distraught, as all the benefits were in her husband's name, which meant this income would be stopped. The staff informed her of the partnership with CAB and that we could arrange for the CAB worker to visit her at home to help with her financial situation. This alleviated some of her concerns, and the staff provided information on prison procedures. The CAB worker met the wife at the family home the next day. This lady said that, in the morning, everything felt bleak and she didn't know where to turn, but after phoning the Visitors' Centre and knowing there were people who could help, she felt more positive and "like a weight had been lifted".

Based on feedback from visitors to the centre and prison staff, the project is extremely successful, and this initial feedback suggests that families value the service.

Conclusion - reflection on the year and hopes for the future

The Visitors' Centre at HMP Addiewell has clearly met the target in our Strategic Aims: to provide and increase direct support and information to families. The Centre has generated a number of positive outcomes for visitors by providing impartial advice and a listening ear, signposting to outside agencies, and provision of a children's play area. In the coming year we would like to change the area so it is more user friendly and will include a room that can be used when families need more privacy. We also plan to provide more activities for the children within the centre and within the local community, as well as a 'Mood Tree' where children can hang messages for their Dad or say how they are feeling. Families Outside and Sodexo will continue their work together to ensure that, going forward, the Visitors' Centre evolves along with the needs of the families visiting.

Visitors' Centre Team, Families Outside
September 2015

"Improvements have resulted in more info for families and a more pleasant supportive environment"