



Families do matter

West Midlands Children & Families of Offenders Project

project news

July 2007

Welcome

As usual, there is a lot going on so we cannot detail everything here. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Prison Based Activity

Information Review

The refresh and update of displayed information has continued. The Visits Centre at Shrewsbury has been provided with lockable display boards. Notices there have been reduced in quantity, and presented in a more colourful and attractive way with the incorporation of images to convey a positive message in an easily digestible format.



Rose Joyce, Project Officer at Shrewsbury adjacent to new display.

At Shrewsbury we have used professionally designed and produced headings at the top of each display board which may be reproduced for any establishment – trying to bring a commonality of approach to the more generic information that is routinely displayed.

Work will commence in Birmingham and Stoke Heath Visitor's centres during September. The exercise will then be repeated within the establishments along visitor's routes.

NOMS National Offender Management Service

Working together to reduce re-offending

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Working together to improve outcomes for offenders and their families



HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?

Registration of your organisation on our website means that you become a part of our searchable database. You will also receive copies of our newsletters and any other bulletins we publish. It's simple to do - just visit our website today at www.familiesdomatter.co.uk and follow the instructions – be part of our database, keep up to date **REGISTER NOW!**

APVU – Marketing Campaign

The months of June and July have seen our marketing campaign for APVU (Assisted Prison Visits Unit) take hold. Each of the pilot's have been provided with fresh, colourful posters advertising APVU, which have been placed in visitors centres and throughout the prisons. Leaflets have also been provided in abundance and have been given to all visitors, distributed to all inmates for onward transmission of information to families and have been incorporated into induction packs throughout this two month period.

Early signs are promising, in that some visits centres have reported that more APVU application packs had been requested but it is too early yet to obtain the figures from APVU which will enable us to determine whether we have achieved success in raising awareness of the scheme and increased the number of applications made. Our thanks go to all of our pilot establishments who have co-operated with this campaign and to APVU based in Birmingham, who have given us the benefit of their experience and support throughout.

HMYOI Brinsford

Annetta Bennett of Kids VIP (Visiting in Prisons) delivered a staff training and awareness seminar early in July. Sixteen staff drawn from all core areas including those working on the visitor's booking line attended. The day was divided into sessions and included group exercises which facilitated a pooling and exchange of ideas. The focus was on the management of children & families of prisoners when visiting in prison and how procedures can be adapted to create a more comfortable and less intimidating environment.

Feedback from participants included: "good to have an opportunity to meet staff from other areas of the prison and share understanding of the impact of each to the other". Annetta Bennett commented that it was great to see such a good mixture of staff from across the prison, all of whom come into contact with visiting children. Annetta has many years of experience working with the Prison Service nationwide and the team welcomed her contribution to the project.

Kids VIP produce an excellent resource folder for prisons which can be ordered from them at a cost of £10.00 which includes postage & packing. E mail to annettabennett@aol.com. This manual is in the process of being updated and Annetta would welcome any contributions and examples of good practice prior to the fresh edition being published early in 2008.

Copies of their video and accompanying booklet – Kids Visiting Prison, showing a family visit taking place, reinforces the benefits of good visiting and the rights of children with imprisoned parents. Available using contact details as above.

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CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS
A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

HMYOI Stoke Heath

Kids VIP training has also been carried out at Stoke Heath where there were twelve attendees and again positive feedback.

Stoke Heath are in the process of finalising accreditation for the “Being Dad” course under Effective Regimes. It is to be delivered by the Chaplaincy commencing in the autumn.

The play area in the visits hall is now completed and being well used. Feedback from families and staff is very complimentary.

HMP Shrewsbury

The new play area in the visits room has a logo! A competition was held for prisoners and staff to name the area and design a sign.

The winner was “Tay”, a prisoner who designed a circular sign which incorporates the location of the prison, the project logo and a description. The design has been worked into a permanent, perspex sign which will be displayed in the area.



HMP Drake Hall

Rose Joyce the Project worker for Shrewsbury is now also working at Drake Hall.

A children’s play area will be provided for the visits hall at this location. Works are currently being undertaken to transform the area for it’s new purpose . These facilities will also be used for the family days that will be part of the new Family Links course to be run there.

HMP Birmingham

Kids VIP training has been carried out at this establishment also during July. Family Information Talks (FIT – see more below) will commence at Birmingham during August initially one session per month. If demand is high additional sessions will be provided.

General

Kids VIP **training** will be carried out in the remaining pilot establishments over the coming months. **Play areas** should be completed and operating at all five locations in the near future and child/family support workers are being provided for selected sessions at some establishments. The workers will concentrate on encouraging more family interaction during the visit, rather than working principally just with the children.

Family Information Talks are to be first tested at Brinsford and after initial feedback/learning will be delivered in all pilot establishments. These will be offered on visits booking and will involve families having an hour with the Project Officer prior to a first routine domestic visit. Although limited to one hour, we hope to cover education and resettlement work in prisons (with appropriate staff and information materials), emphasising the importance of the role of the family in this. The sessions will be evaluated, with before and after comments from visitors. We are grateful to those prison staff and representatives from the voluntary sector who attended our focus group on 5th July and contributed so freely and comprehensively to our plans for the talks, helping to shape the content.

Community Based Activity

Gill Scott has now settled into her role as Community Project Officer based in Telford. Gill has worked in the community within Telford in various roles since 1979 except for a short period in the early 80's when she worked in Wolverhampton gaining valuable experience with BME families. Recently, she was part of a multi-agency team instrumental in developing the Common Assessment Team around the Child (CAF/TAC) process in Telford.

Since taking on her role within this project, Gill has coordinated a joint multi-agency focus group for the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE), to look at what support is available for families of offenders in the community, how this is organised and how it can be improved. The event was very well attended with representatives from thirteen agencies participating, many of whom had not had any previous contact with each other. There was a good exchange of ideas and discussion around the needs of children and families of offenders and lots of interest and enthusiasm in taking this area of work forward. Gill is formally launching the Families do Matter project in Telford with an awareness day for an invited audience on the 14th September. The aim of the day is to raise the awareness of community service providers to the needs of children and families of offenders.

Parenting/Relationship Education & Training

Each of the pilot prisons have agreed a training plan which is now in place. This includes an evaluation framework which will measure the benefits of existing programmes and interventions and will be a requirement for any new activity. Family Links courses are to be delivered at Drakehall. This is a programme widely delivered in the community but with some tailoring for offenders as preparation for release. The training will include a requirement for participants to learn about and actively engage with community partner organisations to increase the likelihood of take up of support opportunities in their own communities after release. The course will be delivered by the college tutors in the prison after appropriate training.

Partner News & Events

Post- Event Reports

Supporting family ties and reducing re-offending by supporting prisoners with children - Families Do Matter Regional Conference – 22nd May 2007

It was really great to see so many at our first regional conference held at the Aston Science Park in Central Birmingham. A particular focus for the day was to enable those working in prisons to recognise the importance of their work and its contribution to important national priorities, such as parenting support and the Every Child Matters agenda.



A packed programme was opened by Steve Goode, the Regional Offender Manager and included some dynamic and captivating speakers including Mary Crowley, Chief

Executive of Parenting UK, Kathy Lightfoot from HMP Askam Grange, Kathy Lee-Cole the Deputy Director of Government office West Midlands, Annetta Bennett from Kids VIP and Helen Vince, Area Resettlement Co-ordinator, HM Prison Service.

Apart from the speeches and a question & answer session for the panel, we ran four different workshops focusing on aspects of working with offenders and their families

- **Community services available to families**
- **Smarter working with the voluntary sector**
- **Family learning and**
- **How we can measure and prove impact**



The feedback we received was very favourable: James Campbell said “The day was both interesting and informative, and the focus on children and parenting added a new dimension to the debate, particularly with colleagues working within the prison estate”, Helen Vince commented, “This was an excellent day – informative, positive and with a great range of interesting people, both contributors and guests”, and Pam Metcalfe from HMP Shrewsbury said “It was a good day”.

We are currently taking on board the suggestions for future events and further training requests. We are also looking at how to deliver a professional development and support programme.

Support Network for all Parenting Practitioners (SNAPP) Event in Port Vale – 13th June 2007

The Project attended this event which had a real buzz about it and with many exhibitors, it made for a colourful spectacle. There were workshops both morning and afternoon but the event was very informal and provided for plenty of networking and browsing time which everyone made the most of.

Members of the project team ran a workshop at the event. This began with a quiz to get everyone thinking about the numbers of children & families affected by imprisonment and then went on to raise awareness of the project and the work currently being undertaken.



**Louise Winterburn,
Training & Engagement Manager**

We gained an insight into the good work being carried out by statutory and voluntary agencies within Stoke on Trent and we hope that the practitioners went away with both an awareness of the project and a greater understanding of the problems faced by families affected by imprisonment.

**Contact the Project Team
Regional Staff:****Lesley Davies**

Project Manager
Mobile 07920 232369
Email: Lesley@familiesdomatter.co.uk

Janet Chinnock
Communications Officer
Mobile 07796 997242
Email: janet@familiesdomatter.co.uk

Both based at:
All Saints House (HMP Birmingham)
280 Lodge Road
Birmingham
B18 5SU
Telephone: 0121 345 2873

Prison/Community Based Team**Doug Hemmings**

Lead Project Officer – Prisons
Tel: 0121 345 2866
Mobile: 07824 550529
Pager: 07699 750894
Email: doug@familiesdomatter.co.uk
HMP Birmingham
All Saints House (HMP Birmingham)
280 Lodge Road, Birmingham. B18 5SU

Rose Joyce

Project Officer – Prisons
HMP Shrewsbury & HMPYOI Drake Hall
Tel: 01743 273121
Mobile : 07796 997287
Pager : 07699 752710
Email: Rose@familiesdomatter.co.uk
HMP Shrewsbury
The Dana
Shrewsbury SY1 2HR

Dorothy Cox

Project Officer – Prisons
HMYOI Brinsford & HMYOI Stoke Heath
Pager 07699 782421
Telephone: 01630 636055
Email: Dorothy@familiesdomatter.co.uk
HMYOI Stoke Heath
Market Drayton
Shropshire. TF9 2JL

Community Based**Gill Scott**

Project Officer – Community (Telford)
Telephone: 01952 388582
Mobile: 0777 0704121
Email: gill.scott@telford.gov.uk
The Swan Centre
Grange Avenue
Stirchley
Telford
TF3 1UP