



# project news

March 2007

## Welcome

Quite a lot is happening and it's impossible to mention everything in this newsletter but if there is anything you want further details on please don't hesitate to get in touch.

### Prison Based Activity

Surveys of prisoners are underway at each of our pilot establishments. These will help us to better understand the visiting procedure and experience from a prisoner's perspective and help us to identify and understand the reasons why some families do not visit. It is also an opportunity to capture and explore any ideas prisoners may have for improvement of the visiting process and ensuring that the most can be made of these rare family opportunities.

A review of the Reception and Induction process is also now being conducted. Part of this is about finding out how and when families are given information about a prisoner, details of visiting procedures and communication methods, who provides this information, how and when. We are also looking for opportunities to include family impact of custody into the assessment processes to assess likely family need and exploring ways we can get families help and support in their community.

Brinsford YOI has been identified as the trial establishment for the information review. The first phase, erecting new notice boards and refreshing and re-presenting the information displayed in the visitor's centre is scheduled for completion by Easter 2007.

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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 data base and will automatically receive copies of our newsletters and any other bulletins we publish.

It's simple to do – visit the website today at [www.familiesdomatter.co.uk](http://www.familiesdomatter.co.uk) and follow the instructions – be part of it and **REGISTER NOW!**

Following an initial pilot presentation in the Visitor's Centre, we aim to upgrade and improve the information further, based on feedback received. This will be done prior to replicating in the other pilot establishments and refreshing the information displayed on the visitor's route within the prisons and YOI's. We would like to thank Action for Prisoner's Families, S.H.A.R.P, HALOW and HMP Birmingham, Education & Skills Department for contributing to our Focus Group in February, helping to shape the way forward.

Work on the action plans for each pilot arising from our prison visiting review continues. We will be shortly testing a marketing strategy for the Assisted Prison Visiting Unit (APVU) to raise awareness of this service. Work has already commenced on the design of new marketing material for APVU and we are looking to promote this service in the Visitor's Centres and with prison staff at each of the pilots.

We are also having a closer look at prison policy relating to visits and prisoner/family communication and how policies address equality and diversity issues.

The following details some of the improvements in family facilities currently in progress in our pilots:

#### **HMP Shrewsbury**

The visits room at Shrewsbury is currently undergoing major refurbishment. This includes complete redecoration, new furniture, a new play area for children and a visitor's toilet and baby changing facilities with direct access from the visits room. A cafeteria is also being provided which will offer more choice, enable healthier options and more substantial menu choices.

The visits room will be made more welcoming by removal of the fixed furniture and provision of more comfortable seating arrangements. A defined and fully equipped children's play area is being incorporated and the prisoner's artistic talents are being put to good use in designing and painting a Disney mural within the children's area. The final outcome is eagerly awaited – before and after photographs will feature in a future edition of this newsletter.

#### **HMP & YOI Stoke Heath**

This establishment is also making improvements to the visits room, including provision of a new and well equipped children's play area. Some supervision is to be provided in the play area on one weekday and one weekend day per week, by the **Pre School Learning Alliance**. Also on a positive note, weekend visits are to be increased to allow morning visits in addition to afternoon visits with effect from April 2007.

#### **HMP Drake Hall**

The visits room at Drake Hall is undergoing improvements. Walls have been removed and a defined space created for a children's area. New toys and play equipment will be provided, the area redecorated and safety recommendations incorporated. A new cafeteria is to be opened to facilitate provision of better quality food for visitors many of which may have travelled a long distance. These changes will go some way towards improving the visitor's experience at Drake Hall.

#### **HMP Birmingham**

Some redecoration has recently been completed in the visits room and we are now currently working with the prison to locate a new play area within the room, which will be equipped as in our other pilot sites. Birmingham is a large prison with high visitor throughput and we look forward to seeing appropriate children's facilities here very soon.

We would like to thank **Kids VIP** who have given advice across all five pilot establishments in relation to the improvement of children's areas and provision of suitable and safe equipment. Find details of publications available from Kids VIP later in this newsletter.

## Research & Evaluation



The consultancy work mentioned in our last newsletter is currently underway. Our consultants, PA Consulting, have begun to engage with our stakeholders to gather their views on how we might develop a delivery model for interventions to strengthen ties between offenders and their families and better support families. PA will focus on potential challenges such as identifying the impact of interventions on reducing re-offending and measuring wider outcomes such as benefits for children.

The engagement has been at a local level, across our community pilot areas and will include stakeholders with a particular interest in hard to reach communities, such as Black, Asian and other ethnic and minority communities. The consultants have also been gathering the views of the National Offender Management Service's regional and national stakeholders

The consultants have been liaising with other central government departments and national organisations to identify key areas of overlap in terms of addressing the needs of offenders and their families - with particular regard to the Department For Education and Skills.

The aim currently is to pull together our key stakeholders to test the developing thinking. Therefore, we welcome input from interested parties within the local pilot areas and from across the West Midlands region.

## Community based Activity



We are continuing to build relationships with our partners in our community pilot areas. However, the consultancy work currently underway will heavily influence the way we approach this area of work. Therefore, we'll provide much more focus on this work once the consultants have reported.

## Parenting/Relationship Education & Training



By the end of April, the roll out of the common monitoring and evaluation framework for parenting courses in our pilot prisons will be complete. We are looking forward to working with our partners to develop a shared understanding of the wider impact of parenting courses for offenders and their families. Work with our partners on developing tools and materials is now well underway. Our initial focus has been on parenting courses but we are now broadening our work to include wider family related training and support. We look forward to bringing you details in our next newsletter.

One of the big issues that tutors leading parenting courses in prisons have raised with us is the difficulty of accessing relevant training and professional development. Utilising the National Occupational Standards for Work With Parents, we have been working with Parenting UK and our

partners to develop a Professional Development Programme. This programme will be launched in the summer and will be open to everyone working in this field within West Midland's Prisons.

In May we are organising an event to look at the role of parenting courses in reducing re-offending. The event will provide an opportunity to look at current policy and practice, what impacts it is possible to measure and how prisons can utilise community resources to support their work and support offenders and their families. We will be sending out invitations shortly. Please keep an eye on our website for details. [www.familiesdomatter.co.uk](http://www.familiesdomatter.co.uk)



## Partner Events & News

### Event Reports

#### **“Wish you weren't here?” event.**

#### **Joint venture by Action for Prisoner's Families, NOMS and HM Prison Service (East Midlands)**

Dorothy Cox, Project Officer based between Brinsford and Stoke Heath YOI's attended this conference in Nottingham late in January. She reports.....

I had the good fortune to be invited to this event, one of a wide range of people working with prisoner's and their families in prisons and visitor's centres in the East Midlands area. The presentations included interesting talks on two different visitor centre models and how the centres were able to bridge the gap between the prison service and affected families. Another worthwhile piece of work highlighted, was the importance of getting good information to families regarding a member's imprisonment at the earliest opportunity, for example at the time of sentence. There was also an enlightening presentation on the importance of and support for enhanced visits, getting the most from them and overcoming obstacles to make them work.

Debate at this event highlighted the different perspectives of individuals working in different disciplines and provided a forum for the sharing of ideas and experience stimulating progress and capture of best practice in this area of work.

I came away feeling positive about the efforts being made around the region to promote good practice and a “can do” culture to improve the experience of families of offenders.

For further information on Action for Prisoner's Families (APF) visit their website at [www.actionpf.org.uk](http://www.actionpf.org.uk) or e mail [info@actionpf.org.uk](mailto:info@actionpf.org.uk).

#### **Staffordshire Youth Offending Service – County Seminar**

Our project was invited to present at this event held in February 2007. The event was focused on joint working in the area of children and families and linked to the Respect and Priority and Prolific Offenders Strategy within Staffordshire.

The event commenced with a key note address from Donna Molloy from the Respect Task Force. She set out the key themes of the Government agenda of parenting and respect, current provision and future expectations. She outlined the proposed extension of existing powers to ensure that help reached those who needed it most and stressed the importance of joint working and taking assertive

action. There followed an earthy presentation from the NCH Foundation who work with anti-social families in Manchester.

Their intensive interventions had produced profound changes in some families and the examples they described demonstrated both the intensity of their work in very challenging circumstances and the successes that were achievable.

A Best Practice Road show then followed with attendees visiting each of four presentations designed to give a flavour of work currently underway. The Roadshow presentations featured this project, Staffordshire Family Group Conferencing, the Meir Project and Stoke and Staffordshire Intensive Fostering Projects. It gave an opportunity to each of the projects to give details of their background and vision, the progress being made and obstacles overcome, and how each could make a real difference to shaping future policy.

The event finished with positive discussions in a question and answer forum, and the promise of an action plan addressing ways of working together effectively in the safeguarding of families in Staffordshire.

Further information on the projects featured can be obtained by contacting:  
Staffordshire Youth Offending Service: [Sharon.moore@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.moore@staffordshire.gov.uk)  
The Respect Handbook, a guide for local services: [www.respect.gov.uk](http://www.respect.gov.uk)  
Staffordshire Combined FGC/YISP Service: Tel 01785 225998.

### **Families Do Matter Event Tuesday 22 May 2007**

We are hosting an event to look at the role of parenting courses in reducing re-offending. It will take place on Tuesday 22 May 2007, at a city centre location. Invitations are to be sent out shortly. Details will be posted on our website at [www.familiesdomatter.co.uk](http://www.familiesdomatter.co.uk) so keep looking!

### **Grassroots Family Days & Support Project**

I went recently to visit the Grassroots Family Days & Support Project. I saw the project in action at a well attended and lively family day at HMP Kirkham and was able to speak to a variety of the project staff on the day, including those working within prisons and those offering family support in the community.



### **Grassroots Family Days & Support Project**



This project is, like ours, funded by HM Treasury Invest to Save Budget. The projects share common goals and can learn from sharing knowledge and experience. To this end, our project staff will maintain good links with Grassroots and will take every opportunity to share learning with their staff

as our projects develop. A big thank you to Lucy Edwards who organised the visit and to the other staff and volunteers who took time to talk to me – especially to Marilyn who made time to talk during her very hectic family day!

Lesley Davies  
Project Manager

Any enquiries about Grassroots should be directed initially to Farzana Kauser, Project Administrator  
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## Publications

**Kids VIP** have two resources currently available for practitioners which they recommend for anyone working or intending to work with prisoners' children:

The first is: **CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS, A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE**, which is a user friendly A4 file highlighting the benefits of positive prison visits in maintaining family ties between prisoners and their families. It contains models of good provision for children visiting prisons and how to replicate that good practice, as well as inspiration for more child & family friendly ways of working. The cost is £10.00 per copy, including postage & packaging, and copies are available from **Kids VIP** (see details below)

A DVD and accompanying booklet are also now available. The DVD provides an opportunity to zoom in on a child focused family visit – the visual experience, whilst the accompanying booklet provides all the information one would need to embark upon a similar initiative. The DVD costs £9.00 including post & packaging.

Both are available by from: Annetta Bennett, Kids VIP Training & Development Manager, PO Box 51217, London SE11 4ZD or tel 02087 582 2679 or e mail [annettabennett@aol.com](mailto:annettabennett@aol.com)  
Cheques must be made payable to **Kids VIP**. For prison based staff, Kids VIP does appear on the system for BACCS payments, a requisition order may therefore be placed.

## Families Do Matter Website

Please do take time to look at our website at [www.familiesdomatter.co.uk](http://www.familiesdomatter.co.uk). You can **register** as an individual to receive newsletters and ad hoc publications upon release and **registering your organisation** will ensure that you become part of our searchable database. Go onto the website at [www.familiesdomatter.co.uk](http://www.familiesdomatter.co.uk) and from the home page click on Partnerships from where you can register.

If you would like to register but are unsure how to do so online, please give me a call, I will ask a few basic questions and then I can then complete the registration process for you – Janet Chinnock: 0121 345 2863 mobile: 07796 997242.

Work has now begun on the creation of a virtual library on our website which will include some documents and links to other useful and interesting publications. If you have anything that you would like to be included please get in contact.



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