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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Prison Reform Trust is grateful to the Lankelly Foundation for its kindness in supporting this research. PRT would also like to thank the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Trust for supporting us to extend our review of family contact development officers to focus on work with young parents at HMP Cornton Vale and HMYOI Polmont in Scotland and HMYOC Hydebank Wood in Northern Ireland.

We would like to thank the Scottish Prison Service for its assistance in establishing the project, in particular Ed Wozniak and Jim Carnie of Business and Analytical Services in the SPS, and Alec Spencer, the Director of Rehabilitation and Care. We valued the careful consideration and final approval for the research to proceed, given by the Research Access and Ethics Committee. We have appreciated the substantial contribution made by family contact development officers, by Tony McNulty, Social Care Advisor, and Scott McNair and Derek McLeod, National Social Care and Family Support Managers. PRT is grateful too for the support and advice we have received from Families Outside.

Dr Nancy Loucks, author of the report, would like to thank her husband Niall and daughters Freya and Savanna for their support during the project. Thanks also to Austin Treacy, then at HMP Magilligan, Susan Donaldson at the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh, Gaynor Bignell at HMYOI Huntercombe, and to the staff who hosted site visits at HMP Bristol, HMYOI Hindley, HMP Castle Huntly, HMP Cornton Vale, HMP Edinburgh, HMP Magilligan, HMYOI Polmont, and HMP Shotts.

Dr Loucks wishes to express her thanks to Juliet Lyon and colleagues at PRT for their support and guidance on this research and especially to Diana Ruthven for her work on the draft of the report and to Mark Heybourne at Action for Prisoners' Families for his update of the situation in England and Wales. Last but by no means least, thanks to all the prisoners, families and staff for their important contribution to the project.

FOREWORD

Common sense might tell you that there is something to be said for encouraging good family contact for prisoners. For common sense would tell you that the more isolated prisoners feel the more difficult their experience of prison; and the more difficult their experience of prison, the worse prison will prepare them for life outside.

But common sense would not tell you what this report does tell you and what this report does prove: which is that good family contact is not simply important but is very important indeed. It reinforces some earlier statistical evidence about the astonishing correlation between maintaining good family ties and reducing reoffending. It is vital for public safety that as much as possible be done to encourage good family contact for prisoners. This is not simply common sense; this is not simply soft-hearted sentiment. This is solid, evidence-based fact, and this report is part of the evidence.

Nor would common sense tell you how important good family contact is for families, since most people's common sense hardly ever thinks about prisoners' families. But this report does that in detail: "Families suffer the pain of separation, but they also suffer in other ways, such as loss of income, loss of home, anti-social behaviour by distressed children, and shame". Good visits, good engagement with the prison, good understanding of their pain, can make things better for them as well as for prisoners.

Much of the research on which this report is based was done in Scotland. It will be valuable in Scotland, but it will be equally valuable elsewhere. The experience of imprisonment for prisoners and their families is just the same on both sides of the border – the pressures on prisons to make savings is the same, the circumstances in the communities in which prisoners' families live are the same. Although the research was done in Scotland, the approach, the reasoning, and the conclusions are all framed in a wider context. The needs of prisons in England and Wales and Northern Ireland are emphasised throughout.

The specific catalyst for the research was the appointment in all Scottish prisons of family contact development officers. The report shows "the effects of employing family officers on prisoners and staff, both when it worked well and when the role was virtually non-existent". It draws attention to an aspect of prison life which is regularly explored in inspections.

In a recent report on Shotts Prison, a high-security prison for prisoners serving long sentences, I wrote "The work of FCDOs and their level of contact with families in general has been commended by the Inspectorate in the past. The role has now all but collapsed... It is recommended that steps are taken to ensure that the previously commended work of the FCDOs is reintroduced and that their role is recognised as an integral part of the work of the prison". In such circumstances this report will be significant. It will teach us all to learn from the good arrangements; and it will teach us to challenge the bad.

In particular I welcome the focus of the report on young parents in prison and their children. Such parents will have very young children, and will themselves often be without many resources for coping with life in prison. In Polmont, Scotland's institution for male young offenders, the most popular programme is called 'Positive Parenting'. The children of young parents in prison have complicated needs and difficulties: I am grateful to the Prison Reform Trust, for its conviction that their needs and difficulties should never be forgotten.

Whatever can be done to encourage good relationships between prisoners and their families should be done. This report makes that clear, and suggests the way forward. Encouraging family relationships should be done for the sake of prisoners and prison staff, because prisoners with stable relationships outside are more likely to be stable prisoners inside. It should be done for public safety, because of its effect on reducing reoffending. It should be done for the sake of prisoners' families. And it should be done because it is right.

Andrew McLellan

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland
February 2005

Keeping in Touch: The Case for Family Support Work in Prison

I. INTRODUCTION

Imprisonment is a family experience. For prisoners, separation from loved ones is one of the most painful consequences of incarceration. Family contact such as letters, telephone calls, and visits are enormously important to prisoners. Akhurst, Brown, and Wessely (1995) suggest that family disruption is one of the risk factors for suicides in custody.

Families suffer the pain of separation, but they also suffer in other ways, such as loss of income, loss of home, anti-social behaviour by distressed children, and shame (Loucks 2004a and 2004b). Every year in the UK about 125,000 children are separated from an imprisoned parent, with an estimated 17,000 separated from an imprisoned mother (Prison Reform Trust 2003). The generally young age of prisoners, and often unstable relationships in their own backgrounds, mean the risk of disrupted relations between prisoners and their children is especially high (Dunn 2003).

A report by the Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners* (SEU 2002), noted that 43 per cent of sentenced prisoners and 48 per cent of remand prisoners lost contact with their families when they entered prison. A number of barriers hindered contact. For example, average figures for distance from home were 56 miles for sentenced prisoners, 66 miles for women, and 61 miles for young offenders, with return journeys taking at least five hours. The Prison Reform Trust reported that 62 per cent of prisoners in England and Wales who were not receiving visits said that someone would probably visit if travelling to the prison were easier (Farrant 2001). Prisoners in the most recent Prison Survey in Scotland (SPS 2004a) most commonly cited distance as one of the difficulties their visitors experienced (67%), followed by cost of visiting (58%) and lack of transport (46%). Lack of information about visits and visiting procedures, inconvenient visiting times and inefficient booking systems, poor staff attitudes, the unpleasant prison environment, and drug detection procedures, provided further disincentives (Loucks 2002).

In short, families are punished through incarceration even though they are not the ones who have been accused or sentenced. The SEU noted numerous emotional, practical, and financial difficulties for prisoners' families. The report cited one survey in which three-quarters of partners and mothers attributed health problems directly to the imprisonment of a family member. Sixty per cent of families said the imprisonment of a family member made them "less well off", and families showed an increased dependence on state benefits for income.

More positively, research now recognises that families can play an important part in helping prisoners through their sentences and contributing to sentence management and prison regimes. Encouraging family ties means much more than simply 'being nice' to families or easing the difficulties of custody for prisoners: earlier research in the United States found that prisoners who were able to maintain good family ties were almost six times less likely to reoffend than those who did not (Holt and Miller 1972). A more recent review of the literature on family ties reported similar benefits (Ditchfield 1994). Services developed for offenders, their children, and families to enhance integration into the community and build support seem to be particularly beneficial (Johnson, Selber, and Lauderdale 1998).

A study conducted at Indiana University found that the benefits of enabling and encouraging prisoner-family ties included decreased recidivism, improved mental health for both prisoners and family members, and increased probability of the family household getting back together after the prisoner's release (Hairston 1991).

Recent research has shown that the maintenance of family relationships is important in aiding the successful resettlement of prisoners and in reducing re-offending. The 2003 Resettlement Survey conducted by the Prison Service in England and Wales found that nearly four-fifths (79 per cent) of those who had received at least one visit from a family member or partner had accommodation arranged on release compared with only half (51 per cent) of those who did not receive a visit (Home Office , 2004). Prisoners are not the only ones to benefit: The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families (now Families Outside) and the Scottish Prison Service noted that good visits benefit prison officers too, as they "... also mean better behaved prisoners and more easily managed prison halls" (2000: 6). Constructive family involvement may therefore provide a key to effective resettlement work in prisons.

In its report on Highpoint North (2003) the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales found that a project set up by the Ormiston Trust which enabled "imprisoned mothers, wherever possible and appropriate, to re-establish or maintain links with their children for the benefit of the whole family" produced significant benefit. The project's aim was achieved primarily through children's visits and one-to-one work. "There was one full-time social worker, a half-time social worker and a half-time child care worker based at Highpoint North and South. The Prison Service paid for half of this service, with the remainder provided from the Trust's charitable funds." According to the Inspectorate's report, the service was in its third year and was well established and appreciated by prisoners and staff at the prison. "In addition to children's visits, the Ormiston Trust supervised contact orders made by family courts, facilitated assessment visits for child psychologists, writing reports for freeing for adoption or contact hearings, and facilitated production order applications for women needing to attend court for family proceedings."

In a Prison Service Briefing in November 2000 Martin Narey, then Director General of the Prison Service in England and Wales, stated "I cannot over-emphasise the important role that families play in helping to achieve effective rehabilitation and reducing re-offending." He later reiterated this, saying "A stable, supportive family throughout the sentence is a key factor in preventing re-offending on release. I firmly believe that we should do as much as possible to sustain family relationships at what for many will be an especially traumatic time in their lives" (ADFAM National and HM Prison Service 2001). The Scottish Minister for Justice made the same point:

...you don't have to be a victim of crime to be affected by it. You don't have to live in a high crime area for crime to have an impact on your life.... The families of people involved in crime have to deal with its consequences day in and day out. Whether their loved one is out in the community continuing to live a law-breaking lifestyle; or is serving a community sentence and trying to stay out of trouble; or is in custody, away from the family, serving a prison sentence, the effects of crime can be – and often are – devastating.... The more family friendly our prisons become, the more we can increase the chances of a prisoner returning to a stable family environment and thus reduce the chances of the prisoner reoffending on release.

(Families Outside 2004: 2)

The Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales summarised the Inspectorate's expectations for the Prison Service's duty of care in its 'Expectations' report (2004: appendix

4). Out of 32 'expectations' specifically relating to family and friends on a range of subjects from mail to telephones, expectation 15 says that: "Efforts should be made to assist prisoners who have family a long way away, or in other countries, to maintain good family contact".

In England and Wales the Prisons Inspectorate annual report in January 2005 stated that:

We recommend that there should be officers specifically tasked to liaise with families, particularly in women's prisons, to assist with the emotional as well as the practical issues that arise. And support for prisoners as parents can have a positive impact on the whole family. We have seen good practice in some prisons, which others could emulate.

(2005: 32)

A report on barriers to employment, training and education for women prisoners by Caroline O'Keeffe, *Moving Mountains: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Employment, Training and Education from the Voices of Women (Ex)Offenders* (2004) also found that:

Women are particularly vulnerable during the period of resettlement and readjustment following their sentence and often feel that they are 'fighting a losing battle'. ... Thus, at this crucial time, when they are extremely vulnerable, women have expressed that it would be helpful to have some kind of mentor or key worker who would be largely responsible for providing emotional support, reassurance and advocacy. ... Where appropriate, women feel it may also be helpful for this person to offer support to women's families in helping them to gain understanding of the experiences their family member has been through and to help with re-adjusting to life with them."

The Prison Service in England and Wales has made some progress towards improving family contact in recent years. Prisons have experimented with 'family days', which allow extended visits for prisoners with children and in some circumstances can mean family members seeing inside the prisoner's cell.

Most new prisons and many existing ones have purpose-built visitors' centres. Visiting entitlements were boosted following a recommendation in the Woolf Report (1991). Evidence from the Prison Service to the Woolf Inquiry stated:

The disruption of the inmate's position within the family unit represents one of the most distressing aspects of imprisonment Enabling inmates, so far as possible, to stay in close and meaningful contact with the family is therefore an essential part of humane treatment There is every reason to believe that the nature of a prisoner's relationship with his or her family will be an important factor in determining whether he or she will succeed in leading a useful and law-abiding life on return to the community.

This acknowledgement of the importance of family ties was very welcome. However, the Scottish Prison Service has taken further steps. It has appointed at least one Family Contact Development Officer (FCDO) at each establishment. The post of FCDO was originally envisaged to be an experienced member of staff with overall responsibility for families. Their remit was to include developing policies to support family contact, hearing complaints from families about visits or other matters, and involving families in many aspects of the prison regime.

1.1 Aims of the study

This research set out to:

- examine the structure and role of FCDOs;
- look at the benefits of FCDOs in Scotland;

- highlight good practice;
- look at the drawbacks to the scheme and the difficulties in providing support;
- find out how FCDO work could be extended across the board to prisons in England and Wales;
- talk to staff both in post and in management about their views on family contact development work;
- talk to prisoners and their families about their experiences of the work of FCDOs; and
- Develop a set of recommendations which would be helpful to the Scottish Prison Service, the Prison Service in England and Wales, and to the development of the National Offender Management Service.

1.2 Background

Since 1992, every establishment in the Scottish Prison Service has been required to have at least one designated family contact development officer (FCDO). This followed a recommendation for the establishment of such a post in a joint report by Save the Children and the Scottish Prison Service, which highlighted the importance of maintaining ties between prisoners and their families (Peart and Asquith 1992). A thematic review of visits in prisons by the Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (1996) highlighted the value of FCDOs, giving a 'boost' to its development in Scottish prisons. However, the extent to which prisons have taken on board the spirit as well as the letter of the original recommendation has varied considerably both between establishments and within individual establishments over time. Prisons elsewhere in the UK are not required to have such a post, though some have created one.

As part of its continuing work on the importance of maintaining prisoners' family ties, Prison Reform Trust submitted a research proposal to the Lankelly Foundation to look at the role of family contact development officers in Scottish, English and Welsh prisons – and to explore whether a case can be made for extending the role of FCDOs in England and Wales.

1.3 Methods

The initial research was a short exploratory project conducted on a part-time basis over a period of ten months. Its purpose was to highlight good practice and to inform practice and policy in England and Wales through the experience in Scotland and elsewhere. It was not designed as a rigorous evaluation of FCDOs or their effectiveness, but rather as an information-gathering exercise.

Every family contact development officer (or their equivalent) in prisons which had them was sent a questionnaire, usually via e-mail. This included all Scottish prisons, four prisons in England which carried out family support work (HMP Bristol, and HMYOs Hindley, Huntercombe, and Swinfen Hall), and HMP Magilligan in Northern Ireland. The questionnaire was followed up with telephone calls where necessary, and with site visits to a cross-section of establishments. In Scotland this included a local prison, a Young Offenders Institution, an open prison, a women's prison, and a long-term prison. In England, this included a local prison and a facility for juveniles. Site visits were restricted to one day at each establishment due to the short duration of the project.

In Northern Ireland a two-day site visit to Magilligan Prison (a long-term prison) was carried out, which coincided with the visit of an Assessment Panel for the Modernising Government Award, and included formal and informal discussions with governors, staff, family officers, prisoners and families during a family induction programme. The questionnaire was deemed inappropriate due to the structure of the family officer scheme at the prison (family officers worked solely on the newly installed scheme for child centred visits, while family work was done more generally by a wide range of staff).

i. FCDOs

The main means of data collection was by questionnaire (see Appendix 1), followed by informal interviews with the FCDOs themselves and, ideally, with visits managers during site visits. The researcher planned to speak to as many FCDOs as possible, though in practice that usually meant one or two in each establishment. At least one FCDO in every establishment responded to the requests for information. The main round of interviews and questionnaires was completed in early 2003. Follow-up meetings and telephone enquiries were carried out in 2004 to update the information and to take into account any new developments, or future plans, prior to publication in 2005.

ii Prisoners

Short, semi-structured group discussions were conducted with a small number of prisoners (see Appendix 2) who represented the range of people within each establishment (e.g. remand prisoners, long-term prisoners). Two group discussions with 5-8 prisoners, lasting about half an hour, were conducted in each establishment visited in Scotland, with the exception of the open prison. In the latter case, many prisoners were away on home leave, so the researcher spoke informally to individual prisoners during the site visit. A group discussion was also conducted during one of two site visits to prisons in England.

iii. Families

It can be difficult to engage prisoners' families in research or even to persuade them to use support services (Loucks 2004a and 2004b). Many families remain hidden within larger populations of marginalised groups, such as single mothers. Some do not wish to be identified due to the stigma attached to them in the public mind and its practical consequences. The stigma of a custodial penalty is passed on to the family, with a number of labels, stereotypes, and assumptions materialising in the day-to-day lives of prisoners' relatives (Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee 1997).

A small number of prisoners' families were contacted where possible. This was done informally through the family induction programme in Northern Ireland, and through contacts via Families Outside (formerly the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families) and through HM Inspectorate of Prisons in Scotland. A discrete number of visitors were also contacted informally at the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh. Family members were usually questioned by telephone about their general experiences with FCDOs and how they wanted to see the role developed. In total, eight family members responded to the invitation to participate in the project. Information from families from other research in the UK has therefore been included where relevant.¹

Documentation

The researcher collected any relevant information available from the prisons such as leaflets for visitors and prisoners and examined records of contacts made with FCDOs. A search of each prison's web site was also conducted to see what information was available for families and whether a FCDO or the equivalent was mentioned.

Additional information

Interviews were conducted with people identified as key players in family contact work in Scotland including those at SPS Headquarters, Families Outside (the only organisation in Scotland that works exclusively on behalf of children, parents, spouses, partners, and other family members of people in custody), and at the Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland.

On completion of the research in Scotland, information was gathered on the early development of family work in England and Wales. We found that only 11 prisons out of 138

¹ This includes contact with six families during an extension to this research on Young Parents in Prison and information from 50 families during research into prisoners' families in the Tayside area (Loucks 2004b).

had designated family support staff. These staff worked in a variety of ways. A family link worker post had been established for some time at HMYOI Hindley, whilst more recently Castington in the North East and Reading YOI had developed a similar role. At Canterbury Prison a worker in the visitors' centre was employed by the prison as a family liaison worker, as well as by the visitors' centre. As a family link worker she had significant input into parenting courses and children's days. In addition, Grendon and Springhill (both on the same site) had recruited a family link worker.

In East Anglia family liaison posts had been funded by the Ormiston Trust, the Lankelly Foundation and the Prison Service at Highpoint North women's prison, Hollesley Bay (now Warren Hill) YOI and Chelmsford Prison, to link in with visitors' centres and input into extended family visits.

At Glen Parva in Leicestershire, two family development officers are based in the visitors' centre. Family link workers operate too in HMP Parc in Bridgend Wales, and Gloucester Prison, where a prison probation officer had her role changed to that of a family link worker. Given this assortment of initiatives in England and Wales, Action for Prisoners' Families, the umbrella organisation which represents the interests of prisoners' families support groups, is keen for some form of monitoring of family link services to be carried out.

Assessment of data

This research was designed to be exploratory rather than evaluative. However, examples of good practice were noted where FCDOs did appear to be addressing the needs of prisoners and their families, which had been identified in previous research (such as concern about prisoners' welfare, transport to the prison, and assistance with special needs; see for example Brown 2001; HMCIP for Scotland 1996 and 2000; Loucks 2002; Peart and Asquith 1992; Social Exclusion Unit 2002) and demonstrated by the experiences of prisoners and their families.

Extension of the project

While this research was being conducted, the Prison Reform Trust, supported by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, was engaged in a separate project on the needs of young parents in prison. It quickly became clear that the Young Parents in Prison Project could contribute useful data to this report by pulling together more information on the circumstances of prisoners and their families. The FCDO project was therefore extended to include the research on young parents in the two establishments in Scotland that house them (HMYOI Polmont and HMPI Cornton Vale). HMYOC Hydebank Wood in Northern Ireland was also included to give a UK-wide perspective.

The 'Young Parents: from custody to community' policy and practice guide, which included DVD resource material produced by Relate and Dawson Films was published separately in December 2004 (Sherlock 2004). However, data from that research, not included in the 'Young Parents: from Custody to Community' report is included here, looking specifically at the work in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 *The structure and role of family support staff*

As mentioned previously, the extent to which prisons in Scotland have taken on board the role of FCDO varies considerably. Prisons elsewhere in the UK are not required to have such a post, though a small number have created one. The following information gives a general description of the post of FCDOs in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, based on the information received through questionnaires, telephone contact, and site visits.

Each establishment had between one and nine officers designated as FCDOs (though at the time of writing, the post of FCDO at HMP Aberdeen was vacant following the resignation of the four officers previously in that role). However, only three establishments in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland, and one in England had full-time FCDOs. In the others, FCDOs juggled their duties with residential work, visits duties, or related jobs such as resettlement work. Even where the post was technically full time, removal from post to cover for other staff, such as for escort duties, was commonplace. In theory, several prisons had an FCDO available at all times, but in practice this varied considerably. In some, FCDOs were not available due to their shift patterns. For example, one prison with four full-time FCDOs had none on duty at weekends, while another placed all FCDOs on the same shift, leaving other shifts uncovered. In others, FCDO posts were not covered during sick leave or holidays, or FCDOs were regularly deployed elsewhere in the event of staff shortages.

Feedback from family members reflected many of the concerns of staff, namely that FCDOs needed to be in place both in practice and in theory to provide the support and assistance families need.

2.2 *Selection and training of FCDOs*

i. Selection

In most cases, staff volunteered for the FCDO post, though in a couple of prisons staff were assigned to it. In HMP Kilmarnock, for example (at present Scotland's only contracted-out establishment), all visits staff were automatically designated as FCDOs. An FCDO there said in most cases assignment to visits was voluntary.

In contrast to the situation in Scotland, prisons in England used a variety of methods to fund and fill a post similar to FCDO. One English prison funded family link work through the European Social Fund. The post was filled by a uniformed officer, who performed a range of family ties and resettlement duties. The separate funding meant the officer could not be removed from post for other duties. One English YOI hired civilian staff (an employee of a voluntary organisation) to fill the post, funded by the Youth Justice Board, which was responsible for the prison. This funding was ring-fenced, and again the family link worker could not be moved from the post to fill other duties. At the time of the research, a third prison in England was advertising for two non-uniformed staff to assist a (uniformed) principal officer in the role of FCDO. These civilian posts were funded by an outside grant. Unfortunately outside funding tends to be time-limited. This means that funding for such posts needed to be renewed either annually or after two or three years.

Whether FCDOs should be civilian or uniformed staff was a contentious issue. Most staff seemed to believe the post should be filled by a uniformed officer. Even where the post was funded by the European Social Fund, the Governor wanted the staff to remain in uniform.²

² The staff in this prison had no family support staff posted in the visits area. They believed this would be a useful extension of their work, but said that non-uniformed staff would be more appropriate for this role.

Managers see the role of family support staff as breaking down barriers between staff, prisoners, and families, and that they work as envoys or spokespeople for the Prison Service. Staff wanted prisoners and families to see uniformed staff doing positive work for them, rather than being 'turnkeys'. Uniformed FCDOs also had direct access to prisoners at all times and were more readily accepted by other uniformed staff.

Prisoners and visitors seemed much more willing to approach and trust a non-uniformed worker, and civilian staff could not be removed from the post for other duties. However, prisoners in one group discussion hinted that they might be more likely to take advantage of a civilian worker for perks such as extra telephone calls. At HMYOI Huntercombe, a combination of uniformed and non-uniformed staff in the role of FCDOs was about to be tried out – which is one way of addressing all of these issues. Indeed, one family member in Scotland suggested this as a way of making family support staff more accessible to families.

Even within the ranks of uniformed staff, the question of what type of officer should fill the post was not entirely straightforward. Family support staff were unanimous in saying that FCDOs should only be those officers who wanted to do the job and were truly committed to it. Beyond this there was less agreement. Some believed residential staff were best placed to do the work, since they had direct contact with prisoners and could report to families about a prisoner's situation. One family member believed such direct contact with prisoners was an essential element of the work of FCDOs. Others believed visits staff were best placed, as visitors had more access to them. In some prisons, residential staff worked on the halls part-time and spent their time as FCDOs in the visits hall or waiting area. However, the argument for full-time FCDOs worked against this dual role.

Still others argued that FCDOs should be fairly senior staff, in either rank or experience, in order to command the respect of other staff and the influence necessary to encourage change. Indeed, in one interview with senior managers we were told the role was originally envisaged as a senior post. In practice, less experienced non-residential staff often filled the posts in order to save money.

ii. Training

Training for the role appeared to be very limited, with most FCDOs saying they received no specific training for it. In Scotland, a prison officer seconded to work with the Scottish Forum on Prisoners and Families (now Families Outside) ran regular one-day training sessions on visits and the needs of prisoners' families, for new recruits at the Prison Service College. None of the FCDOs described this as training for their role.³

Training for the basic duties of FCDOs was usually just through experience on-the-job, though seminars for FCDOs run by the Scottish Forum on Prisoners and Families were also available. The seminars were run on an ad hoc basis, usually every few months, through a post partly funded by the Scottish Prison Service and filled by an officer seconded from the SPS to the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families. Topics included child protection issues, the needs of teenagers with a family member in prison, resettlement, and general reports of progress, experiences, and practice between establishments. The seconded officer also met with FCDOs in individual establishments to assist in setting goals and implementing action plans. At the time of this research, these seminars and meetings had been suspended while the Scottish Forum (now Families Outside) reorganised and the post of National Family Support Manager was being developed. FCDO seminars have since been reinstated on a quarterly basis, run by members of the Rehabilitation and Care Directorate (specifically the Social Care Advisor to

³ 'Training from the Prison Service College' was one of the responses available on the questionnaire (see Appendix 2), but none of the FCDOs selected it. This may be because the training has only recently become available.

the SPS and the National Family and Social Care Manager) with input from Families Outside and KidsVIP.

The Rehabilitation and Care Directorate, acknowledging the lack of training for the work of family support staff in the SPS, is currently creating an induction pack for new FCDOs. Like the quarterly seminars, the pack is a joint effort between Families Outside, the Scottish Prison Service, and KidsVIP and contains information about the role, available support, examples of information for visitors, travel and the Assisted Prison Visits scheme, research on families, information on children and child welfare, and examples of good practice. FCDOs in Scotland can also share information, questions, and good practice through the FCDO Forum, an SPS intranet system.

In England, family support work also tended to be needs-led; visits to other prisons known to do similar work were the only concession made to training. We found no evidence of training or Prison Service guidance about the role in England and Wales.

Lack of training was a concern for many FCDOs. They identified child protection issues, needs of prisoners' families, state benefits, drug awareness, resettlement and links with organisations outside, counselling skills, mediation, and customer service, as training which would be useful in their role. Others commented that experience as an officer, particularly in the role of residential staff, was also important. At least as important as training, if not more so, according to some FCDOs, was that FCDOs had to be the right people – the right personality type – in the post for the right reasons, and there because they genuinely wanted to do the job.

2.3 What is the Nature of FCDO Work?

Even in Scotland, where the post of FCDO is relatively established, little central or co-ordinated guidance regarding the appropriate role of an FCDO exists. While this ensures flexibility for development of the role appropriate to each establishment, it also meant that the level of priority it was given varied considerably between establishments and depended greatly on the extent to which individual FCDOs and managers took the role on board. This situation is now changing, as a more detailed, standardised job description for FCDOs is currently being produced at SPS Headquarters.

FCDOs at six prisons (four in Scotland and two in England) said they had a formal job description for the post. A seventh prison was in the process of developing one. FCDOs at only two of these seemed to feel the description matched what they did in practice. None of the remaining FCDOs were aware of having a job description, including the original job description created centrally at Scottish Prison Service Headquarters. This lack of clarity of role led one FCDO to comment that “Lack of understanding by other staff and prisoners... means that we tend to be used as ‘wandering trouble-shooters’.” The job description currently being developed at SPS Headquarters should help clarify the role of family support staff in Scotland.

FCDOs at only one prison said their formal job description matched their work in practice. The others who had job descriptions said in practice the role was still underdeveloped and that staff were rarely given the time to develop the role to its full potential. Basic duties at most of the prisons included managing parent/child bonding visits, dealing with queries and verifying Assisted Prison Visits criteria (financial assistance for visitors), providing information and leaflets, and improving contact between prisoners and families through advice, telephone calls, letters, and visits. One family worker said that a common problem was for young people to arrive in custody without knowing telephone numbers for family members or how to get

them – a problem which seemed to be increasing with the dependence on mobile phones, often to the exclusion of a land line.

The main role of FCDOs consisted of encouraging and re-establishing ties between prisoners and their families, whether through parent/child visits, support during a crisis, or assistance in maintaining contact. While prisoners can ring families, families cannot themselves contact prisoners by telephone; an FCDO may be the only point of contact families have if they need to reach someone in prison.

It is clear that the role of family officer could be developed: as the response from one YOI noted, an FCDO's main role can be "to include and advise family members in the sentence management process to allow them to support their son, brother etc. in addressing his offending behaviour." According to the Prison Reform Trust, many families still do not feel included in prisoners' sentence plans, despite the greater emphasis on resettlement in recent years (Seward 2002).

Family support staff often ran a number of initiatives. Family photographs taken with the prisoner could be arranged for special occasions. This initiative was seen as especially important in cases of children whose parents were serving long sentences. Videos could also be made at some prisons, and special arrangements (decorations, toys) were often made for children at Christmas and Easter. HMP Magilligan had introduced a 'show and tell' scheme in which children attending parent/child visits were given a box with their name on it to take into the prison. The box could be filled with school work, toys, etc. to share with the father; then would be pre-screened for security and taken in by the children and given to the fathers on their visit.

Though it was not part of the questionnaire, some general discussion arose about whether family support staff were necessary in all prisons. For example, a former Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland – a powerful advocate of the work of FCDOs and the involvement of families in prisoners' sentences – believed the value of FCDOs lay primarily with longer-sentenced prisoners and their families. Similarly, FCDOs at two open establishments commented that their post was not as vital for prisoners there (see 'feedback and monitoring', below), though this was not a unanimous view. In England there were concerns that a specific post for family contact was too prescriptive and risked 'reinventing the wheel' in those establishments which already provided such support through other means, such as personal officer schemes.

Family support work is perhaps most obviously of value for longer-term prisoners, in that they are separated from their families for longer, and families theoretically have more opportunities to get involved in the prisoner's sentence. Different types of prisons do need to provide different types of support. The biggest gap in provision appeared to be in local prisons. This is understandable in that these prisons have the highest throughput of prisoners and therefore (arguably) the greatest pressure on staff numbers. However, the need for more family support may be greatest in these prisons, as remanded and newly sentenced prisoners and their families will be the least familiar with the system. Families in this research and elsewhere identified "... remand into custody as a crisis point in their involvement in the criminal justice system" (Penny 2002: 12).

Despite better access to families, prisoners housed in open conditions also demonstrated a need for family support staff. Families which have been separated by imprisonment, especially for long periods, may not be prepared for the adjustments they will have to make upon the prisoner's release. Preparation for release through pre-release courses and counselling, both

for prisoners and their families, could be a very beneficial service from FCDOs. In an article for the Prison Reform Trust's quarterly magazine, one prisoner made these comments:

...my marriage survived the sentence, but not the release. When I returned home it soon became evident that things had changed. Instead of my wife and children relying on me for everything, they had become independent, self-sufficient. They had learnt to live without me. I felt surplus to needs.... Perhaps we should concentrate more on the emotional challenges of release, and not just the material things.

(Seward 2002: 24)

This prisoner had spent the last three years of his sentence in an open prison.

The National Prison Survey (Dodd and Hunter 1991) noted that one of the most important factors influencing whether a prisoner received visits was the length of time they had been inside: those serving ten years or more were less likely than others to receive visits from friends and family, nearly half of whom had received no visits in the previous three months. The period immediately preceding release was another – and often unexpected – point of crisis. The 'shock' of increased contact and 'normality' places an often unexpected strain on families, but preparation for this and pre-release support was often lacking. Family contact work, where it exists, tends to focus on longer-term prisoners in the midst of their sentences. The need for support prior to sentencing and indeed at the end of a sentence appears to be underestimated.

In sum, comments from FCDOs showed that they believed their work was undervalued and (probably as a result) under-resourced. As one noted, "This work – in my opinion – could be much more effective (but less tangible or measurable) than many of the other programmes delivered in reducing reoffending."

Young Parents in Prison

One of the key messages from the Families Outside Conference in 2004 was that all services need to be aware of the impact of imprisonment on children and to respond appropriately. The tendency is to focus attention on the children of adult prisoners. However, people in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), while often still 'children' themselves, are frequently parents as well. Research into young offenders in Scotland found that about twenty per cent of prisoners were parents (Loucks et al. 2000).

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the Prison Reform Trust was engaged in a programme on the needs of young parents in prison and the community while this research was being conducted. A young parents policy and practice guide has been published separately (Sherlock 2004), but this section briefly outlines the main findings and reports in greater detail on research not included in the main report, looking specifically at the work in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The information in this section comes primarily from sets of focus groups conducted at four stages over the course of a year, including at least one group of staff and one group of prisoners at each stage. Where possible the same members of staff and prisoners took part in each group in order to track any changes in the establishments over time. Prisoners' families were also contacted by telephone where possible. In total, 49 prisoners, 48 members of staff, and six family members participated in this part of the research.

Many of the issues for young parents and their families reflected those for prisoners and families in general. Concerns included feelings of guilt about being in custody away from one's children; not having enough time with children or other family; the need for advice and support for people in custody as well as for those outside; lack of consistent, co-ordinated

information for prisoners and families; assistance with travel and travel costs; and a lack of preparation for release.

However, these issues were compounded for young parents in a number of ways. First, most establishments in Sherlock's research (2004) did not routinely ask young people upon entry to custody if they had children. This meant that prison staff were likely to be unaware of young people who may need support in this area. Unlike many establishments in England, staff in establishments in Scotland and Northern Ireland housing young people asked inmates if they were parents as a matter of routine. They did not, however, compile routinely statistics on the number of young parents; since the information is available, regular collation of these statistics would be useful for prisons to monitor the need for support for young parents.

Probably the most important difference between young parents and parents generally in prisons was the inevitably young age of the children affected by their parents' incarceration. This is not to say that older prisoners do not also have young children; rather, the proportion of people with very young children is much higher in YOIs – establishments that may not recognise young parents as a group in particular need of support.

Meaningful contact with very young children is extremely difficult through letters or telephone calls. This increases the importance of good quality visits. Yet dedicated parent-child visits are not always available for young people, nor are they open to all young parents even in YOIs that have such visits. Visits halls may not have play areas for children, or facilities may be poor. A frequent concern at one establishment was the cleanliness of the play area and the toys; people bringing young children in for visits were not allowed to bring in their own pushchairs or child seats, yet not enough such equipment was available in the visits hall to accommodate the number of babies. Young children would get restless and bored sitting at the table with their family. One woman with two very active young children said she now had to take them to visit their father individually, as she could not keep them both at the table for the whole visit, and her partner was not allowed to get up from the table to help her when the children got restless and started running around the room.

Younger children are also less likely to understand a prison's rules or why their parent is not able to leave. Explaining imprisonment to a child is difficult at the best of times (Loucks 2004a and 2004b; Inmates and Families at HMP Wolds 2003); explaining it to very young children who do not understand why daddy can't get up and play or why mummy can't go out to the shops with them for a few minutes increases the pressure on parents. One young mother said her son blamed himself for her incarceration and asked at each visit, "Will you come home if I'm a good boy? I'm being good, so why aren't you coming home?"

Very young children, particularly infants, may not remember or feel comfortable with a parent with whom they have little or no regular contact, even from visit to visit. Inmates and families reported that babies often cried and would not settle when they were handed to a parent who was a relative stranger to them, and one mother said her child had stopped calling her father 'Daddy' when they visited the prison. Those who are very young when a parent enters custody may not remember life at home with that parent, potentially increasing the difficulty in adjusting to 'normal' family life after release. Such problems may be more likely for people serving longer sentences, but other research has found that even very short periods of custody can disrupt relations with a very young child (Wolfe 1999; National Policy Committee on Resettlement 1994).

Further, young parents may be less likely to be married or in long-term relationships. Several young men in the research had children with more than one partner. A number of these men

had further concerns about maintaining contact with their children when the mother had established a new relationship, especially if they had not been named as the father on the child's birth certificate. While virtually all of the young people had legal assistance, this was invariably for criminal law; advice on issues of family law was much more difficult to obtain. One young mother in the research was in the middle of a custody battle for her daughter. She had retained the services of a family solicitor in her home area, but Legal Aid would not cover travel expenses for the solicitor once she entered custody a few hundred miles away in HMPI Cornton Vale. She therefore had to find a new, local family solicitor based near the prison and start the case again. In the meantime, she had not seen her daughter in over two years.

The need for family support work with young parents is clear. Young parents in custody do not always have the information and support they need to maintain contact with their children. Equally parents outside were rarely in contact with outside organisations that could offer additional support. Much can be done to assist this (often neglected) group, and good practice was evident in all three YOIs in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

HMPI Cornton Vale, predominantly through the work of the FCDOs and managers, has a number of positive initiatives in place. Dedicated 'Little Cherubs' visits for mothers and their children take place in a specially designed room inside the prison chapel. The room has toys, games, and crafts, access to a kitchen for drinks and snacks, and a fully equipped outdoor play area. Women who wish to participate in this programme must be serving at least nine months in custody, have served at least two months of their sentence, have had no serious discipline reports, not be on closed visits (but can still have mother and child visits, children must be under the age of 16, their last MDT must have been negative, and they need to be cleared by their social worker and security. If they have produced a positive MDT, visits will be suspended pending the results of a multi-disciplinary case conference to discuss the strategy for their return to Cherubs visits.

Another recent initiative for families at Cornton Vale is Family Group Conferencing, set up to help women and their families deal with any crises that may arise during their period of custody. The St. Margaret's Family Centre was recently opened in Cornton Vale, again in the chapel. It now houses the FCDO office and is available specifically as a resource to families and to organisations outside that work with families.

HMYOI Polmont has created a number of initiatives for young fathers, both through the FCDOs and through the Programme Officers. Father-child bonding visits were set up as separate visits for fathers taking part in the establishment's parenting programme. These visits still take place, though a dramatic increase in the number of inmates and consequent pressure on space in the visits hall now means that the visits are no longer separate. Other initiatives continue in Polmont, however, such as the Storybook Dad programme in which fathers make videos of themselves reading stories for their children to have at home. Polmont's Parenting Programme is also open to all young fathers, whether they have contact with their children or not. Social work staff in the YOI have run sexual health and health promotion courses for all inmates, though this is not yet conducted on a regular basis.

HMYOI Hydebank Wood in Northern Ireland openly admitted to having no provision for young parents at the start of the research. They had, however, drafted a parenting programme which began during the course of the project. The programme was innovative in a number of ways. First, it was designed by an outside organisation, Sure Start, which works specifically with young children and their parents in deprived areas. Second, the course was run jointly by male and female co-ordinators so inmates could get both a mother's and father's perspective.

Third, one of the co-ordinators was an ex-prisoner, which increased the respect inmates had for the programme and provided added value in that the programme could identify directly with the young parents in prison. Related to this, and perhaps of most interest, was a module in the course called 'Parenting from a Distance'. This helped young fathers in custody see how they could continue to be parents even when separated from their children, and could apply not only to people in prison but also to those separated outside through the breakdown of relationships. Finally, the programme was designed on a modular basis so prisoners could choose what they wanted their course to include. Feedback from young fathers who took part in the first course was very positive, and their enthusiasm was such that they chose to include all the modules in their programme.

In addition to the parenting course, Hydebank Wood had nearly completed a purpose-built visitors' centre by the end of the research and was setting up the post of Family Officer. The newly-built visits hall had a separate area for visitors with children, and child-centred visits such as those at HMP Magilligan, were planned.

In sum, young parents in prison face particular pressures, both because of the young age of their children and because their needs are largely unrecognised. Examples of good practice in establishments such as those in Scotland and Northern Ireland show that much can be done to assist this group, often through the work of dedicated staff such as FCDOs.

2.4 Links with other Prison Staff

About half of the FCDOs (though notably only two in Scotland) said their prison had a Visitors' Centre where three of them were posted. The remainder visited the centre, or had an FCDO notice board there. At HMYOI Hindley, the family link worker was a civilian member of staff who had previously been the Visitors' Centre Co-ordinator. At two prisons, FCDOs, along with staff in the centre, ran or participated in 'clinics' for visitors. In a third prison, an FCDO's clinic had been organised, but no FCDO had managed to attend because they were always needed to cover other duties. FCDOs in three prisons attended regular, minuted meetings with the Visitors' Centre. All other contacts with Visitors' Centres were informal.

Most contacts between FCDOs and resettlement staff were on an informal basis. Two prisons held regular minuted meetings with the two FCDOs in attendance, and in three others, FCDOs and resettlement staff shared a line manager. In one establishment, the main FCDO was also head of resettlement and shared an office with induction and resettlement staff. Contact with social work or probation staff was also largely informal. Only one person mentioned the participation of family support staff in the prison's working groups on suicide, drugs, and bullying, though two others mentioned participation in child protection issues. The overall informality of contact was perhaps surprising, given the importance usually ascribed to core FCDO functions such as resettlement, and contact with social work and probation.

In practice, informal relations appeared fairly strong between groups, with each referring cases to the other and keeping in regular contact. The role of FCDOs did not appear to overlap very much with that of other staff. For example, social workers are only obliged to deal with cases which fall under their statutory remit, namely those where prisoners are serving more than a certain period of time. FCDOs were available for all prisoners, and for their families. Prisoners expressed a preference for FCDOs in some cases: FCDOs, unlike social work staff, were not obliged to record information such as family problems on the prisoner's file. Social work and probation staff were often very busy, and FCDOs could remove some of this pressure. One FCDO manager suggested that child protection requirements strengthened

the argument for having at least one FCDO in post at all times. For example, evening visits were available in many prisons, but social work staff were not on site at those times.

The distinction between the work of FCDOs and personal officers was less clear. Prisoners often said that they did not know who their personal officer was, that their officer was often unavailable, or that he or she was uninterested and unhelpful. Prisoners' families said that they had no access to personal officers and usually did not know who they were. The effectiveness of personal officers appears to vary considerably between establishments and indeed between individual officers. Personal officers are likely to be able to assist in most queries that could be handled by an FCDO; whether they have the time to deal with them alongside their other duties is debatable. In one establishment, FCDOs believed their presence relieved pressure on other staff. In sum, the role of FCDOs did not seem to overlap significantly with that of personal officers, but rather it complemented it.

The relationship between FCDOs and the chaplaincy was complex. In some prisons, special visits and events such as Family Days are organised through the chaplaincy. At HMYOI Polmont – which has an engaged team of FCDOs as well as programme staff active in family work such as parenting courses – a member of the chaplaincy attended the family induction sessions. As with any member of prison chaplaincy, they also met with families at times of crisis and thereafter remained in contact. During research for the Young Parents in Prison Project, a chaplain at Polmont estimated that between eight and 19 prisoners contacted the chaplaincy team on any given day. In another prison, however, the family link worker said that referrals to the chaplaincy had decreased considerably following the introduction of family support staff. Like personal officers, the chaplaincy may be more useful to prisoners than to families, though families should at least be aware of the existence of prison chaplains.

Notwithstanding areas of overlap, several factors contribute to the argument for a designated post of FCDO. First, FCDOs provide an identifiable person or post for families to contact. Second, the specific label and task means family support work is more likely to be prioritised; without a designated post, such work can easily be overlooked or ignored. Third, FCDOs can act as advocates for families and respond to their needs both on request and more proactively. As an example, the wife of one long-term prisoner due for release had had no contact with her husband's social worker, despite the fact that her husband had just been 'up for parole'. She knew her husband had a personal officer, but she had no contact with him. Her view was that FCDOs would be able to provide the necessary advice and support if they were left to do the job instead of being taken away to do other things.

Rather than simply ensuring facilities for visits are good and that information is available, designated family support staff can build on relations with families to increase a family's participation in prisoners' sentence plans, rehabilitation, and resettlement. Improved welfare of prisoners and families is also likely, as better relations mean better communication and information regarding risk of suicide, concerns about mental health, and drug use. With designated family support staff, contacts with families can be recorded, action can be taken, and monitoring carried out (see HM Prison Service 2002).

Whether designated family support staff are necessary also depends on the expectations of the role (see 'What improvements could be made?' below). If FCDOs act merely as facilitators for good visits, i.e. through provision of information to prisoners' families, then the work could well be covered by other staff. If, however, they take a more active role and treat their job as an important tool in the effective rehabilitation and resettlement of prisoners, then the need for designated staff is more apparent. The work can easily be more involved,

such as discussing a prisoner's progress with families and including them in, for example, sentence management. A senior manager in Scotland explained that establishments like HMP Perth, HMPI Cornton Vale, and HMYOI Polmont take the role further than "just ensuring good visits". A governor in a juvenile facility in England initially described family link work as a "frilly bit", but changed his view when he learned what the worker actually did in terms of contacts with families and prisoners and their outcomes.

2.5 Finding out about FCDOs and how they can help

i. Information for prisoners

Prisoners were informed about FCDOs through a variety of methods. Information was given at reception in two prisons, but more commonly during induction, on posters or leaflets, from personal officers, and by word of mouth. A standardised template for information leaflets in Scottish prisons is currently being designed through a joint effort between Families Outside, the Scottish Prison Service, and Kids VIP. The intention is that FCDOs can use this to adapt leaflets to include local information while ensuring vital, general information is included.

FCDOs in seven establishments said they contributed directly to prisoners' induction, though this tended to vary in practice according to the number of FCDOs available to do so. In at least one establishment FCDOs did not participate in induction themselves, but induction staff informed prisoners about their role. In only three establishments did FCDOs state that their participation in induction would not be useful. This was mainly because they believed most prisoners would already know about FCDOs from other prisons by the time they reached these establishments, or that other staff in the prison such as personal officers provided such information. Most of the remainder, however, saw some value in involving FCDOs in induction:

Visits are probably the most important part of any prisoner's time, therefore knowledge of the visits system is crucial.

... [useful] to give prisoners an insight on the role and how we can assist them and their families through what could be traumatic times.

Owing to the obvious link with the visits function, this tends to be more about sorting out (albeit important) visiting problems rather than raising awareness of developing family contact within the prison.

... helps reinforce [the concept of] 'progressive' regimes and the importance of good family relationships and good prisoner/officer relations. Child centred visits and FCDOs present staff as genuinely interested and concerned.

In two prisons (one in Scotland and one in England), FCDOs conducted individual interviews with prisoners as part of their induction. These establishments were the only ones in which all prisoners in the group discussions knew who and what the FCDOs were. Prisoners in establishments where they were not interviewed on admission suggested that this should take place as a matter of course, as they believed information for themselves or their families was very difficult to obtain otherwise.

In the group discussions, some prisoners said they had experienced difficulties in obtaining information about FCDOs once they were further into their sentence. If, for whatever reason, they missed out on information about family support during induction, a number of prisoners said a leaflet or other information was not always available on the wings. Further, prisoners transferred in from other establishments did not go through induction. As a result, even those who had heard of FCDOs were not necessarily clear about their function.

ii. *Information for families*

Families learned about FCDOs in a similar manner to prisoners, through posters or leaflets, from the Scottish Prison Service web site (though only eight prison web sites mentioned the existence of FCDOs), or, more commonly, from the prisoners themselves or from other visitors. Prisons which had Visitors' Centres used these as a means of informing visitors about FCDOs, and in one prison, visitors received a small card on going into visits which explained the role of FCDOs. Recently HMYOI Polmont started providing a newsletter for visitors, 'The Inside Story', in the visits waiting area (HMIP for Scotland 2004). In some prisons, however, information about FCDOs was only available if prisoners or visitors asked for it. Only two prisons, one in Scotland and one in England, provided information in the courts about family support.⁴ One prison in England sent information packs directly to prisoners' families, with their permission, within 24-48 hours of the prisoner's reception. A family member in Scotland suggested a similar practice should be adopted there so that families were informed directly instead of "having to chase up information".

In addition to induction for prisoners, four prisons in Scotland and the prison visited in Northern Ireland had developed induction programmes for families. One prison in England offered families the opportunity to meet with workers from the Youth Offending Team within seven days of a young person's reception into custody. Family induction was viewed unanimously by staff as a useful opportunity to engage with prisoners' families:

Because of the open nature of visits at [open prison], a clear explanation by an FCDO of 'what and when' to visitors would settle their minds and perhaps stop any abuses of trust within our visit set up.

Having seen the value and input of FCDOs from induction to family support groups, I understand the useful dynamics for the prison in using families to intervene in difficult decisions.

It would allow the family to ask questions about regimes, drugs, etc. and would hear the 'truth'. We do this at present but only if someone asks about it.

Properly resourced and organised, these sessions could be really beneficial for making and maintaining contact with prisoners' families, explaining routines and processes – from our perspective – while introducing the FCDO teams as the first point of contact.

Families who have had no prior knowledge/involvement in our penal system find it very difficult to get basic information. I believe prisons have a fundamental responsibility to provide this information, not just at the outset but throughout a prisoner's sentence.

With the exception of the group undergoing family induction at HMP Magilligan, all of the family members interviewed were either unaware of the existence of FCDOs or had only found out about them after making a complaint, by chance, or after considerable effort. Upon further prompting, some recalled seeing the officers in the visits hall, but did not know what 'FCDO' stood for or what the officers did. Research over a year later in Scotland noted the same problem – that families were often unaware of the existence of FCDOs, even in prisons where family support staff were more active (Loucks 2004b).

Provision of information was particularly important for families. Several commented that induction for families, security-cleared photographs from inside the prison, or videos, would be helpful for them to picture what life was like for their families inside. Unsolicited, an FCDO at

⁴ In a meeting of Families Outside in April 2002, staff in a Scottish prison said they had tried to put leaflets in the local court, but were denied permission. They were able to provide leaflets in other locations such as libraries, job centres, and solicitors' offices. Currently Families Outside are working on a new initiative to produce information for families which will be distributed to all courts in Scotland.

HMP Shotts showed slides of the prison in the visitors' waiting area and was astounded at the interest he received from visitors. A family member at another prison also suggested a leaflet specifically for first-time visitors to set out the 'basics', as well as someone to explain procedures and forms such as the APVU form. In her view, leaflets and forms for visitors "should be written by someone who's had to go through it". Access to information could be a particular problem for foreign visitors: the Survey of Visits Practice in England and Wales (HM Prison Service 2001) found that only 18 per cent of prisons had information leaflets available in languages other than English.

Lack of information persisted as a theme amongst families: one commented that "99 per cent of staff are helpful, but not necessarily informed". In her case, she once arrived for a booked visit after travelling for several hours (each visit for this family necessitated an eleven hour return journey), only to be told that visiting times had changed and that no visit session was scheduled. One parent wanted to help his son change the names on his list of visitors; no one could tell him how to do this when he first rang the prison, and it took him a further eight telephone calls to various people before he received the appropriate information. Other information requested included life inside, regime opportunities, preparation for release, and contacts available to support families in the community. These issues are some of many in which FCDOs, given the opportunity, could take a more active role.

Research in England by the Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups (now Action for Prisoners' Families) identified the special needs of young people with family in prison (Brown 2001), as did a report in Scotland by Families Outside the same year (then the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families; McCulloch and Morrison 2001). Particular difficulties for young people included a lack of awareness or consideration by the prison of the needs of teenage visitors, difficulty in visiting without an accompanying adult, and difficulty finding information about arrest and imprisonment. Young people wanted access to someone outside the prison system they could talk to in confidence. Their needs are unlikely to be acknowledged or addressed if family support staff are struggling to cover even their most basic duties.

One of the main means prisons used to provide information to families about FCDOs was through posters or leaflets at the prison. While helpful, this means that families have to reach the prison in the first place – find it, learn about the procedure for visits, learn about visiting times, what identification they will need, what they can bring in for themselves or for the prisoner – all before they ever learn about the existence of an FCDO. The need for information in courts, prior to imprisonment, is therefore an obvious gap in information for families:

The need for support throughout the remand period is clear, but there are immediate needs at court, particularly for families inexperienced in the criminal justice system. They need to know the basic facts about which prison someone is likely to have been sent to, how to arrange a visit and how to get there: facts which the court has no duty to provide.

(Penny 2002)

The first of the Key Messages from the Families Outside Conference in 2004 was the need for proactive provision of information, support, and guidance to families at the earliest possible stage (Families Outside 2004). In some jurisdictions organisations such as the Prisoners' Families and Friends Service or Partners of Prisoners Support Group (POPS) may be available to provide some information, but, while such services are good, provision is patchy.

Family support staff are well-placed to provide information about their prison and visits to the relevant courts and, indeed, at 'feeder' prisons.

iii. Information for other staff in the prison

The extent to which other prison staff were aware of the role of FCDOs varied. Four establishments included information about FCDOs in their prison's basic training package and in articles in staff newsletters. Officers at one establishment arranged talks with staff on the wings and distributed leaflets. Respondents in all other establishments said staff learned about FCDOs by word of mouth. The visibility and awareness of FCDOs by other prison staff therefore seemed to depend very much on the FCDOs themselves. According to one FCDO during a site visit, creating and maintaining a high profile for themselves is an important way of ensuring awareness of their role, increasing the confidence of staff, prisoners, and visitors in what they do. It also maintained the momentum of their work and made the post less vulnerable during changes in staffing and management.

2.6 How do Prisoners and their Families make Contact with FCDOs?

Prisoners could make contact with FCDOs by asking an officer, filling in an application or request form, or by approaching an FCDO directly. In a few prisons, FCDOs made contact during induction, through personal officers, or by referral from family members. Referrals could also come from social workers, probation staff or YOT workers. Families could approach FCDOs in person, contact them in writing, or ring the prison switchboard. At one establishment families could ask to see an FCDO through the Visitors' Centre, while others said they could ask any member of visits staff. During the original research, only four prisons in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland, and two in England said families could ring the FCDO office directly. This situation had improved slightly in the subsequent update, where about half of FCDOs said they had an office, a dedicated telephone line, or an answerphone.

During this research, researchers and family members alike found that getting in touch with an FCDO was sometimes straightforward, but that often as not it took a great deal of effort and persistence to make contact. In a few cases the prison switchboard operator did not know who or what the FCDO was, which meant that telephone calls to them were frequently transferred between offices and staff, often with no opportunity to leave a message. The family members interviewed for the research found the difficulty in contacting FCDOs to be quite distressing when they were trying to gain information about family members.

Scottish prisons have the benefit of being connected to the internet, and English and Welsh prisons increasingly have access to an intranet system. This means that family staff can be contacted directly via e-mail. Indeed, most of the questionnaires for this research were sent electronically. Family members in Scotland who had access to the internet would be able to contact FCDOs in that way.

A consistent finding from the group interviews was that many prisoners said they had never heard of FCDOs and did not know what an FCDO did. This was mostly the case for those serving short sentences, though even in one long-term prison none of the prisoners in one group knew what an FCDO was. While it is less surprising that people recently in custody – those on remand in particular – were unfamiliar with FCDOs, family contact for this group is arguably the most important. Entry to prison, especially for the first time, is extremely stressful both for prisoners and their families. Families may not know how or when to visit, and in the case of remand prisoners, they will not know how long the prisoner will be in custody. Ease of contact with families is therefore of the utmost importance.

Most FCDOs said prisoners learned about them during induction. The group discussions suggested that many prisoners did not retain this information. If they recalled receiving leaflets about FCDOs, many did not pass this information on to their families (some because they wanted to keep the information for themselves, others because they said the envelopes they were given to send the information were too small).

Prisoners in custody for longer were more likely to know about FCDOs. This was particularly so for people who had made use of FCDOs, usually for parent/child visits. Prisoners who did not receive visits usually did not regard FCDOs as being relevant to them. Prisoners seemed more willing to contact FCDOs when they could approach them directly, such as when they were based in residential halls or were otherwise accessible, and when they knew who they were, such as in Cornton Vale and Hindley, where family support staff spoke to prisoners individually shortly after reception.

The number of requests for contact varied considerably. FCDOs in six prisons said in an average week they had no requests for contact from prisoners. In other prisons, however, estimates ranged from 2-6 requests per week up to 10, 12, 50, and "constant". The number of contacts from family members also varied, from none to as many as ten per day (where FCDOs were based in visitors' waiting areas). Few prisons recorded regularly requests for contact from prisoners or family members, so the exact figures are not known.

The reasons for contact with FCDOs were largely similar across establishments. Contact from prisoners was usually about financial assistance for visitors, followed by concerns about a family member or visitor and arranging special visits (i.e. parent/child visits). One family worker in England listed a wide range of reasons for contact, including lack of visits or family contact, no telephone number for family, problems with relationships, contact with solicitors or probation/YOT staff, general information about the prison, and assistance in reading and writing letters. Problems with transport appeared as another fairly common issue. Families contacted FCDOs for similar reasons: financial assistance, concern about a prisoner's welfare, general information about visits, and to leave messages for prisoners.

In the group discussions, most prisoners appeared reticent about contacting FCDOs. Almost without exception, they said that the staff uniform presented a barrier to them, and that unless it was absolutely necessary they would handle any problems with their families themselves. Some were willing to speak to certain officers for things like extra telephone calls, but not to others. Much contact with FCDOs seemed to be for special visits or telephone calls. Those who had made contact with FCDOs or whose families had done so generally appeared more willing to do so again and to recommend it to other prisoners. At one prison, Prison Listeners⁵ had an informal policy of recommending FCDOs "as a first port of call".

2.7 Outreach

One of the questions asked in this research was what FCDOs did, if anything, to encourage visits from those who were not visiting. The question was inspired by the report, *Teenagers with a Family Member in Prison*, which recommended the development of an information and training programme for schools to "raise awareness of the effects of imprisonment of a relative on young people and their need for special support" (McCulloch and Morrison 2001: 37).

Outreach to families who are not visiting seems to be a significant gap which FCDOs, given the opportunity, could fill. This does not mean FCDOs should be expected to make home visits; rather it means that the role of FCDOs should not be limited to the visits room. For

5 Prisons operate Prison Listener Schemes in which selected prisoners are trained by The Samaritans to offer peer support.

example, some FCDOs made attempts to increase contact with people outside the prison, such as the Family Support worker at HMYOI Hindley (below). FCDOs in three prisons in Scotland and one in England said they distributed literature outside the prison such as to courts and libraries. Two in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland monitored which prisoners did not receive visits, though this information was mainly used for suicide prevention. FCDOs in five prisons mentioned contact with social workers or probation staff as a means of outreach.

Two prisons in England took a more active role. One sent out information packs to every family upon a prisoner's reception (with his consent). This is in contrast to other prisons, which although they might provide information for families, depend upon the prisoner to send it. One Scottish prison did something similar by writing to each prisoner's family, enclosing information about visits and financial assistance. At HMYOI Hindley, the family worker helped young people in custody to regain contact with family members which, for whatever reason, had been lost.

Staff in HMP Bristol also took an active role in outreach, though not necessarily as part of their job as FCDO nor necessarily for specific prisoners. For example, Bristol was the only one at the time to provide information and contact details to families in court, though HMP Edinburgh now does so as well. Staff at Bristol also made presentations to magistrates to tell them about the family development and resettlement work at the prison. They took an active role in outreach as well through national programmes such as "Prison, Me, No Way!" and "National Crime Day". Both of these programmes, initiated by a prison officer at HMP Hull, are designed to inform school students about prison life (in the former case through talks by prison officers, and in the latter, through prison officers running the school like a prison for a day, including classes on drug awareness and similar topics). The programmes are funded by local trusts and prison-based charities and depend largely on prison staff who are willing to volunteer their time. General outreach will not target specific family members who are not visiting, but should raise awareness of the issues and encourage positive contact between prison officers and the public.

FCDOs at Bristol raised the issue of prisoners who are not receiving visits because their partners or other family members are also in custody. Arranging visits for this group can be very problematic, especially where conditions are overcrowded or the prisons they are in are far apart. In such cases the family support staff arranged video links so family contact would not be lost.

2.8 Feedback and monitoring

As noted above, few prisons kept regular records of the amount and type of contact FCDOs made with prisoners and their families. Similarly, in England most prisons received only informal feedback about the work of family support staff. Staff at nine prisons said they compared their work with that of FCDOs at other prisons as a way of monitoring their role. Six prisons had used questionnaires for visitors. In one case, where the role of FCDO was in its initial stages, this involved talking with visitors in the waiting room to gather information. FCDOs at three prisons said they provided a suggestion box for visitors. The few prisons which did record contact with prisoners and visitors and the outcome of those contacts, used this for monitoring purposes. One officer said that the number of requests for help were themselves an important source of feedback: "If what we do was not working, visitors would not be coming to us for support and advice."

One problem with feedback and monitoring of family support work is that the impact on prisoners and their families is difficult to measure. Measuring performance and quality is

difficult if the service is based on 'soft' targets such as improving family ties. Nevertheless, the Directorate of Rehabilitation and Care in SPS Headquarters sees a value in obtaining feedback from visitors to the extent that staff there are currently designing a template for comments and complaints forms for visitors, using the one FCDOs designed at HMP Shotts as the model.

In the absence of such feedback at the time of the research, we asked FCDOs what they thought would be lost if their post did not exist. Some responses to this question reflected a fairly cynical view of the role of FCDOs. For example, the FCDO in one prison said nothing would be lost, as the role was virtually non-existent in their prison. Another said the role was underused and undervalued. Staff in two prisons believed the quality of personal officers in their prison negated the need for family support staff. FCDOs at the remainder of prisons, however, saw great benefits in their role. Most were to do with improved relations between families, prisoners, and staff. They perceived wider benefits as well, such as "the continuity we have brought to dealing with visits enquiries, co-ordinating personal officers and liaison with social work and other agencies." Staff at one prison believed their work was of tangible benefit in reducing tension in the prison. More specifically, they thought their presence reduced the risk of conflicts between prisoners and between prisoners and staff, and also the risk of suicides.

The questionnaire then asked whether other staff could fill in if a designated post did not exist. FCDOs at two prisons believed they could (though another FCDO at one of the two prisons disagreed with this). Most respondents thought other staff would be able to fill some (but not all) of the duties, while staff at five prisons did not think other staff would be able to fill in for them.

In explaining their responses, FCDOs said that a large number of staff would have the knowledge to handle most questions and requests themselves, such as providing information about visits or arranging for an extra visit. At two open prisons, staff commented that prisoners had regular contact with their families through visits and home leaves, so the assistance of FCDOs was unnecessary. Another FCDO at an open establishment disagreed with this, saying that FCDOs were perhaps even more vital during such a period of transition. The officer explained that the increased contact with prisoners and their families in preparation for release was often unexpectedly stressful and that FCDOs could help prepare both families and prisoners for this. A review of the open estate in Scotland echoed this view, saying that open prisons would benefit from pre-release programmes as well as preparation and support before home leaves and support on their return (HMCIP 2003a; also Reid-Howie 2003). Scottish Executive Justice Department Circular 12/2002 addresses this problem to some extent with prisoners sentenced to four years or more. The Circular requires such prisoners to have contact with a named social worker in the community within a week of sentence and contact between this social worker and the prisoner's family within six weeks. Contact with the family in these cases appears to be focused more on the needs of the prisoner than on support for the family as a whole (see also comments from prisoners' families in Loucks 2004b). The named social worker liaises with social work staff in the prison rather than with FCDOs. This is an area in which family support and increased liaison with FCDOs could be developed.

FCDOs said they referred some enquiries to probation or social work staff. The concern was that "[prison] staff are stretched to do their normal duties", so taking on extra demands such as tracking down telephone numbers or assisting with family problems and crises was not a realistic expectation. Another concern was that not all prison staff had the interest in, or

aptitude for; dealing with visitors and their concerns. Continuity of staff for family contact was another benefit which many thought would be lost if cover was used too extensively.

FCDOs gave a number of specific examples in which their work has made a positive difference. Most often mentioned was their role in facilitating visits outside normal visiting times during domestic crises:

- A visit outside normal hours was arranged in the case of a child who was severely disabled so the visit could “take place with more dignity for the child and prisoner.”
- Special visits and support had also been arranged following the death of family members. In one case the child of a woman in custody had died; the FCDO arranged for a private visit for the family at the prison, after the funeral, away from the regular visiting area, and with facilities to make tea and coffee.
- FCDOs were able to ease family concerns about bullying and suicides, by arranging extra visits for the mother of a boy who had been assaulted in custody.
- In another prison, FCDOs arranged a special visit for the parents of a 16-year old who had just received a life sentence. The visit included a tour of the establishment and a pre-arranged meeting with her.

A large part of one FCDO's caseload was young offenders who had no family and had been in care for much of their lives. Family support staff helped them to find relatives and friends:

- On one occasion the worker helped a boy write to his father after the father had put the telephone down on him twice. She then contacted the father herself and was able to restore the contact.

Family support workers were able to help families in a range of areas:

- In yet another prison, FCDOs and family members worked together to encourage prisoners to 'detox' from drugs. European research has found co-operative efforts between prisons, prisoners, and families to be very important in the support of families of drug users (Hennebel, Fowler; and Costall 2002).

Most of these examples demonstrate the need for staff to give time and dedication, as well as to gain the confidence of prisoners and visitors. Given the time, FCDOs were also able to organise parent/child visits as well as Family Information Days, Family Fun Days, and induction programmes for families. An FCDO manager at one prison described the benefit of FCDOs as “unbelievable”. He believed loss of FCDOs would mean loss of interaction with visitors and prisoners, and that children would lose out. In his view, and that of the family support staff there, other staff and managers become committed to the work of FCDOs once they see the benefits of it.

2.9 Management support

Unlike the Prison Service in England and Wales, a specific Family Ties section does not exist in the Scottish Prison Service, despite a recommendation to this effect in the same report which recommended the establishment of FCDOs. In the Scottish prison system the aim is to include families much more generally in the management of offenders, as part of a wider agenda for social inclusion, as outlined in the SPS report, *Making a Difference* (2002; see also The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service 2000).

While the officer seconded for work in the Scottish Forum on Prisoners and Families worked directly with family support staff, the post of national family support manager was only developed in April 2002, ten years after the original recommendation for FCDOs. The Manager was responsible for long-term planning and for national and local policy regarding

family support work. Since *Making a Difference*, the post has devolved into that of national family and social care manager to reflect the more inclusive remit. The new manager took up the post in December 2002.

Central co-ordination for the development and support of FCDOs in Scotland has therefore only begun in the last couple of years. Not surprisingly then, the role of FCDOs in many establishments has even recently been vague and inconsistent. In a review of visits, it was noted that "... of concern is the variation in the level of operation of the FCDO Scheme between establishments, from the way it was implemented to how it was developed and resourced" (Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service 2000). The report went on to say that:

Some establishments appear to have appointed staff as FCDOs without a particular interest in the role. Training and resources for the scheme with the allocation of time or appropriate funding have been lacking. FCDOs feel more evident support is required at establishment and headquarters level.

(*ibid.*: 3)

One of the main conclusions of that report was the need for support from senior managers:

The FCDO Scheme has been acclaimed for the role that it performs and it is acknowledged throughout the SPS management that it is pivotal in maintaining good quality family contact and relationships, with the resulting effect that this has on stability within prisons and staff/prisoner relationships. It is essential that senior management support the Scheme by clearly communicating their support to FCDOs, allocating appropriate resources, and directing the level of effectiveness that they would wish achieved consistently throughout SPS.

(*ibid.*: 6).

Responses to the questionnaire, the site visits, and minutes from FCDO seminars suggested that this support from senior management was lacking in many establishments. Comments on the questionnaires similar to that below, from FCDOs, were not unusual:

Recently [the FCDO] office lost its outside line (security? phone bill? reason not clear), and the manager [is] not keen to give full internet access. [I] sometimes wonder how important this initiative really is to the SPS.

The issue of support for the role of FCDO emerged again and again. During the original period of research, three FCDOs at two prisons resigned from their posts because they believed the potential of the post was wasted and that they were not given the opportunity to fulfil their role. The remaining FCDOs at one of these prisons have since left as well, leaving the post vacant. It was necessary to discontinue the research in one prison in England when the part-time FCDO left and was not replaced. One prison, which previously provided the model for family support work in Scotland, now does very little family support work, as FCDOs are regularly deployed elsewhere. The Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland highlighted the reduction in the use of FCDOs in its inspection of the prison:

The main area of concern was the role of the Family Contact Development Officer. The work of the FCDOs and level of contact with families in general has been commended by the Inspectorate in the past. The role has now all but collapsed. The FCDO office within the visits waiting room was previously open during all visits. It is now generally closed. Information on Noticeboards is now out of date. Innovative approaches such as contact with external agencies involved with prisoner families; involvement in induction; ACT and training have all but stopped. Open days and other attempts to make the process of visiting and maintaining contact as easy and pleasant as possible have started to falter. It is recommended that steps are taken to ensure that the previously commended work of the Family Contact Development Officers is reintroduced and that their role is recognised as an integral part of the work of the prison.

(2003b: 39)

In discussion with FCDOs across the Scottish Prison Service, the post of FCDO is only as strong as the management support behind it. If managers' priorities lie elsewhere, the work of FCDOs will be lost.

Even with dedicated FCDOs, family support staff are not always available. The problem was not necessarily lack of good will or lack of belief in the work of FCDOs. Rather, the very real constraints of running prisons with increasing numbers of prisoners and decreasing resources forced governors to make hard choices. The work of family support staff often fell further down the list of priorities compared to other work within the prison, particularly work on accredited programmes necessary to fill Prison Service measures of performance. One FCDO described the situation like this:

In the past, good work was being done at [prison]: prisoner induction, family induction, social work involvement, staff awareness sessions, play area improvements, etc. A good management line was in place and the workload increased, and benefits were felt prison-wide. But as the workload increased, we found it harder to get off post [to do the work of FCDOs] as overall staff numbers decreased. The team became disillusioned and the initiatives fell by the wayside, and the FCDO role diminished. But with a little support I am sure that the role could be developed and could be used as a good tool in prisoner resettlement.

Stable support and indeed funding for family support work may only be achieved through the formal incorporation of such work within existing priorities such as rehabilitation and resettlement. Funding was more likely to be forthcoming if family support work was tied in with 'Approved Activities' such as parenting programmes or resettlement work. The work could usefully be linked with other elements of family contact, such as the work of social workers or probation staff, visits staff, and Visitors' Centres.

The Scottish Prison Service Statement of Charter Standards for Visitors was published in December 1993, before the recommendation for FCDOs had been developed into regular practice. The main emphasis of the Charter is on prompt and courteous treatment of visitors; the standard for provision of information to visitors is only that information on visits be available in writing at the prison and that visitors may receive it on request. During the original research, interviews with senior managers in the Scottish Prison Service suggested that the Service planned to create a more cohesive strategy. As outlined in *Making a Difference* (SPS 2002) the thinking is that work towards inclusion, employability, safe and

decent housing, debt management, addressing drug misuse, etc. is all linked together. Some prisons do this more effectively than others.

SPS Policy Objective 3 now ties these objectives together, describing “close and meaningful family contact with family” as “an essential part of the SPS Correctional Agenda” (SPS 2004b: para. 3). It states that SPS policy is:

- “To develop and improve links with prisoners’ families and standards of visiting facilities for visitors;
- To recognise the need to involve families more in the prisoner’s sentence; [and]
- To help prisoners settle back into their families on release by involving relatives in the planning and preparation for their return to the community.” (*ibid.*: 3.1-3.3)

Perhaps surprisingly the policy does not mention specifically the role of FCDOs as a means of carrying out such work, though the accompanying guidance document mentions FCDOs in several places. Discussion with FCDOs and managers suggests that this omission of FCDOs may be because a cross-section of staff carry out this type of work. In this way, SPS stated policy aims to ensure prison staff do not view work with families solely as the remit of FCDOs.

The SPS created the post of National Family Support Manager (now National Social Care and Family Support Manager) ten years after it created the post of FCDO. The post of National Social Care and Family Support Manager will hopefully be able to move such work forward. Only now does the post have a formal job description (Appendix 3). However, some FCDOs feel the solution lies elsewhere.

The role of FCDO in Scotland is not yet an integral part of programmes recognised as ‘Approved Activities’ by the Prison Service such as parenting programmes. In Scotland, approved parenting programmes are currently run at HMYOI Polmont, HMP Greenock, and HMP Shotts; HMP Perth has submitted its programme for approval (SPS 2004c). To date, only HMP Perth has established a formal link between its programme and the work of its FCDOs. Conducting parenting programmes is gradually becoming more of an integral part of the FCDOs’ role: prisoners who participate in the parenting programme at HMYOI Polmont, for example, become eligible for special parent/child bonding visits – an initiative run through the FCDOs – in addition to their regular visits entitlement. According to one FCDO manager, funding and support for FCDOs could remain limited unless an ‘official’ link with such programmes can be made. Others said this could be done by including the role of FCDOs in the Scottish Prison Service’s Core Role Outputs (CROs) or Continuous Improvement Targets (CITs).

The Prison Service in England and Wales has taken the opposite approach to its Scottish counterpart. It has a Family Ties Section in Prison Service Headquarters, but it has no consistent designated posts at establishment level to carry out the work. In England and Wales, Prison Rule 4 directs contact with people outside. It highlights the need for prisoners to be able to maintain contact with their families and states that prisoners should be “encouraged and assisted” in doing so to “best promote the interests of his family and his own social rehabilitation”. This Rule was originally Rule 31, but in the latest redrafting of the Prison Rules in 1999 it was moved forward to Rule 4. Although the wording of the Rule did not change, moving it to the front “implies an increase in [its] priority to the Prison Service” (Loucks 2000: 25).

The Northern Ireland Prison Service Charter Statement contains a section entitled ‘Maintaining Links with Family’. However, the section refers only to the minimum provision of visits, letters, telephone calls, and home leave for prisoners; provision of family support or information for families is not mentioned.

2.10 What improvements could be made?

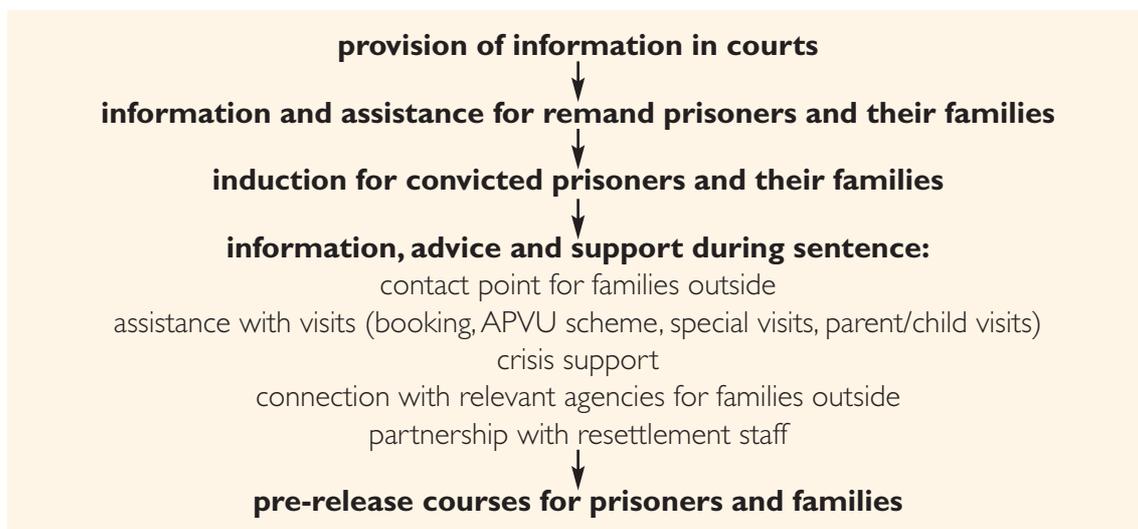
Family support staff were virtually unanimous in their opinions as to how the role could be improved. Almost without exception, they wanted to be able to devote more time to the role, to have more staff, or both. Often a number of staff were available in theory, but they were regularly pulled away from the post or were expected to fill the role alongside their other duties. In other prisons the role existed in name only, with little or none of it being filled in practice. Many respondents suggested the need for a “full time post”, a “dedicated team”, “the time”, and “a higher profile”.

Other suggestions for improvement included development of community involvement and pre-release training, appropriate training, and “long overdue recognition and funding from the [Prison Service] at local level”. An FCDO manager who responded believed the entire role of FCDOs in their prison needed to be restructured, namely moved from Operations to Regimes if it were to “[deliver fully] the correctional agenda and harness the positives of prisoners’ families working in partnership with the prisoner and the prison. This will ensure continuity of delivery and resettlement that is essential for success.”⁶

The potential for FCDOs is huge, but that potential is not always realised. The former Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland promoted the idea of family involvement in a prisoner’s sentence wherever possible e.g. to encourage detoxification or participation in training. His view was that families should be given as much information as possible, both to encourage rehabilitation of the prisoner and to increase awareness of a prisoner’s life inside. A discussion with one family member showed the need for such information: the mother of a prisoner wanted more information about what help her daughter could get for drug addiction while she was in custody. She was also concerned about her daughter’s release: what would the effect be on her daughter’s children? What should she tell them? Who could she contact for help outside the prison? The mother wanted advice and support to know whether she and her family “were doing the right things” because, as families of prisoners, “you feel like you’re the only ones going through it”. Family support staff should be well placed to provide such assistance.

The work of FCDOs appears to be of value at all stages of custody. The diagrams below show how the work of FCDOs could contribute greatly to family contact throughout imprisonment:

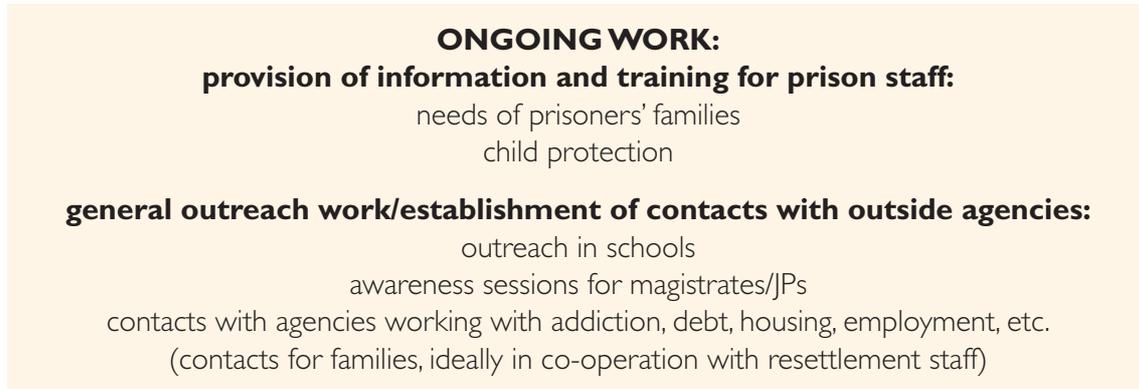
Figure 1a: Potential Remit of Family Support Staff: Progressive Support



⁶ The structure and placement of FCDOs varied between prisons. According to a senior member of staff at Scottish Prison Service Headquarters, it was deliberate that no central guidance had been given on this subject, to allow for local variation and need. For example, an FCDO in a long-term establishment may have more of a role in resettlement and pre-release than would FCDOs in a prison housing remand and short-term prisoners. See the section entitled ‘Management support’.

The type of assistance outlined above ensures appropriate support for prisoners and their families throughout their time in custody. Ideally much of this work can be done in co-operation with staff in Visitors' Centres, resettlement workers and allied voluntary and statutory organisations. And, much of the work of family support staff can be ongoing, such as general outreach, awareness, and longer-term planning:

Figure 1b: Potential Remit of Family Support Staff: Ongoing Support



Clearly, family support staff have a great deal to contribute to prisoners, families, and indeed to the overall regime and smooth running of a prison. This potential is unlikely to be tapped, however, if the work of FCDOs is approached piecemeal. A firm commitment to the work from both FCDOs and managers, both in theory and practice, must exist if prisons, prisoners, and families are to reap the benefits. HMP Magilligan in Northern Ireland provides a good example of how this can work. Managers introduced the role of Family Officer there alongside a number of wider changes to its regime such as training and pre-release courses. Radical changes to the system for booking visits were made at the same time, along with changes to visits procedures. Child-centred visits were introduced in co-operation with the prison's Visitors' Centre to coincide with Family Induction and an informal support group for prisoners' families. Links with outside addiction and employment organisations had also been developed. Magilligan's initiatives were not particularly innovative in themselves. However, one notable feature was a genuinely holistic approach to issues which affect prisoners and their families.

The organisation and comprehensiveness of these changes to the prison has, in the words of both prison staff and managers "freed staff to concentrate on the work of Family Officers" within the existing numbers of prison staff. At the time of the site visit, the work of Family Officers at Magilligan was not yet as comprehensive as it was in other establishments, such as Bristol, in its efforts to address a wide range of needs (for example, debt management was not included). The difference at Magilligan was the extent to which all staff and managers recognised the benefits of supportive interaction with families and worked to improve it. Reportedly, some of the momentum of the family work at Magilligan has diminished following the departure of prison managers particularly dedicated to that work – a problem in other prisons as well. However, the basic structure is still in place, and interest in work with families is gradually spreading across the prison estate in Northern Ireland.⁷

2.11 What is good practice?

Managers in the Scottish Prison Service said the remit of the post were deliberately left flexible to accommodate local variation and need. The structure of family support posts therefore varied considerably between establishments. No single 'best way' was evident, but practice within a number of establishments in Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland showed particular thought and innovation.

i. *Staffing*

At HMYOI Polmont, when this research took place, a first line manager (roughly equivalent to a Principal Officer in England and Wales) held the post of FCDO. The group discussions with prisoners suggested the seniority of this officer helped his work considerably, as he was clearly an experienced, long-standing officer, and other staff listened to him. At least one residential officer on every residential wing was also designated an FCDO with their work co-ordinated by the main FCDO/manager. The manager was listed as the contact person for families, and he took day-to-day responsibility for much of the family support work and longer-term planning. The post-holder shared an office with information, induction, and resettlement staff.

The influence of staff who work as FCDOs appeared to be an important issue. A frequent complaint from prisoners and families, for example, was that FCDOs could be wonderful people doing good work, but that attitudes and behaviour of other staff on visits seriously damaged the positive aspects: "Many officers don't know how to deal with visitors except to treat them as prisoners". In one establishment, a prisoner complained about comments an officer on parent/child visits had made to his partner. The FCDO removed the officer from visits; when the officer next returned to post, the prisoners noted a marked improvement in the officer's demeanour. If visitors arrived late or with the wrong identification, the problem was often resolved by FCDO intervention.

In one prison, overcrowding meant that a certain number of prisoners were randomly assigned to closed visits during each visit session in order to accommodate the number of visits. This situation directly affects the quality of contact between prisoners and families. In the group discussions, prisoners queried whether less senior FCDOs or civilian workers would challenge such a practice or be able to motivate change.

The potentially extensive role of FCDOs suggested that their work merited a full-time post. Even those who mentioned benefits from having residential experience and being able to give first-hand information to families about prisoners said they needed to devote their energy to the job full-time in order to do it properly. The then National Family Support Manager for the Scottish Prison Service noted an "immense difference" when FCDOs are in post full time, in terms of what they can achieve, their relationships with families, and the number of referrals they receive. Whether it is necessary for all the FCDOs in each establishment to be in post full time is less clear.

ii. *Location*

Family support staff need a stable base from which to work. In practical terms, families need a telephone number they can ring to contact FCDOs, ideally with a direct line and without doubt an answerphone or some other means of leaving a message. Staff also need a central place to file relevant information and paperwork. Some FCDOs had an office located in the visits hall. This was beneficial for access to both prisoners and families, but meant that they had to use time allocated for their visit in order to talk to an FCDO. Two prisons (HMP Shotts and HMYOI Polmont) had an office in the waiting area for visits so families had direct access to them and time to speak either before or after their visit. The Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families and Scottish Prison Service seemed to support this practice, saying:

The waiting room is obviously the point at which proactive FCDOs such as there are in [several prisons] can make an immense difference. They are available to provide information and understand families' needs and actively build relationships.... [FCDOs] can also be available for support after a difficult visit or if families have concerns.

(2000: 4)

7 In addition to the recent developments at HMYOC Hydebank Wood (see 2.3 above), HMP Maghaberry has a Visitors' Centre, a fully staffed play area for children in the visits hall, and a number of new initiatives to encourage interaction between fathers and their children.

Still others had an office within the main prison (one in the reception hall) so prisoners had direct access to them. This had the benefit of increasing prisoners' and officers' awareness of the role, though direct contact with families was sometimes difficult. Many FCDOs had no office space or telephone, however, which made contact with prisoners or particularly with families more difficult, nor did they have a central place for relevant paperwork. This made organisation, communication, and continuity with other FCDOs very difficult.

iii. Funding

As mentioned in 'selection and training' in the Findings and Discussion section, prisons funded the work of FCDOs in a number of ways. Prisons seemed to benefit from being flexible in their approach to funding. Funding from outside the prison for at least one post, for example, guaranteed the presence of an FCDO, without risk of being moved from the post to cover other duties. In Scotland, the post of FCDO is part of the core budget in prisons, as each establishment is required to have one (even if the post is not functioning fully). SPS policy is that outside funding is only sought in Scottish prisons in exceptional circumstances and only for resources not deemed as essential to the basic running of the prison. Even so, outside funding has been put to considerable use: in HMPI Cornton Vale, for example, three prisoners applied for (and received) £10,000 from the National Lottery fund to pay for play equipment for children's visits.

Stable, ringfenced funding from the prison ensures the existence of an FCDO, but increased funding from within the prison or from outside may enhance the work they are able to do. The prison which employed someone specifically to seek out funding seemed to benefit from this approach, though it is unfortunate if posts such as FCDOs have to depend on outside funding for their existence. Arguably outside funding for such posts also sends mixed messages to staff, prisoners, and families about the value a prison service places on such work.

iv. Remit

Staff and managers acknowledged the role of FCDOs in the basic provision of assistance and support for families and prisoners. The main function of family support staff seemed to focus largely on arranging special visits or extra telephone calls in most prisons. However, many FCDOs recognised their wider potential in the long-term rehabilitation of offenders and in the shorter-term provision of support during custody. At least two prisons, one of them HMP Bristol, linked the work of FCDOs directly with other types of resettlement such as housing, employment, education, debt, and addiction. Two others were actively engaged in providing families with enough information to encourage prisoner participation in the regime. In one prison, the FCDO was involved with the prison's suicide prevention team and anti-bullying team. This seemed to be a valuable way to keep staff informed about potentially vulnerable prisoners. At least two others used family officers as liaison points with outside organisations involved in resettlement.

At HMYOI Polmont, family contact work also took place through Education and Programmes, both of which conducted a considerable amount of work geared towards young fathers. Also of interest at Polmont was their creation of a Visits Forum, which met once a month and included FCDOs, staff from visits, security, the booking office, and canteen, as well as a young offender representative. A Family Induction Programme has been introduced at Polmont, which includes a tour of the establishment.

HMPI Cornton Vale has been innovative in its use of family contact work. Recently staff at Cornton Vale have initiated a programme of Family Group Conferencing in which trained staff assist in the mediation of issues of concern that arise during the period of custody. HMYOI Polmont is also looking to introduce this (HMIP for Scotland 2004). Special visits between

parents and children were of particular note in Cornton Vale, where an area had been set up near the prison chapel with toys, games, and crafts for children and their parents to share, as well as an extensive outdoor play area (funded through a Lottery grant, as mentioned above).

v. *Recommended practice*

Despite its criticism of the lack of funding and support for FCDOs in many prisons, the Scottish Forum on Prisons and Families still thought it was worth the Scottish Prison Service putting into place a “commendable structured implementation process”. This process is as follows:

- the careful selection of prison officers who are willing to take on the FCDO role;
- training in relevant aspects of the role;
- a communication strategy which advises staff, prisoners and visitors about the role and about its relevance to each;
- the allocation of time set aside to perform the role (particularly for the FCDO to be available in the visits room/waiting area during visit sessions and to have time to follow up referrals);
- the allocation of an ongoing realistic budget to purchase and replace what is required (toys, equipment, information, posters, etc.);
- management support to develop new initiatives. (2000: 3-4)

All of these points were reinforced by the responses from FCDOs and came out of discussions with prisoners and their families. No one establishment appeared to meet all of these criteria, though a number had made clear progress towards these aims.

2.12 Overview

The FCDOs were asked what they believed were the biggest hindrances to their work. Almost unanimously, they replied that they were not allotted enough time to do the job properly, or that not enough staff were available to cover the post. Most FCDOs filled the post on a part-time basis. Those who held full-time FCDO posts were often taken away from that post to cover other duties, or shift patterns did not keep the post filled full-time. Several FCDOs said that the lack of time and staffing showed an overall absence of support and commitment from relevant managers and from the Prison Service generally. One officer went on to say that the Scottish Prison Service had acknowledged the benefits of family support for both families and prisoners, but that it still “constantly fails to offer FCDOs the much needed support they require to take this initiative to the next level. They seem to feel that by appointing more managers with a remit to advance our work, that will suffice...”

The FCDOs were not the only staff who voiced these concerns. Comments from a prison governor, who supported the general concept of FCDOs, suggested that practice fell far short of the original motivation for setting up the post. This governor noted that the role at present paid “mere lip service to the needs of families and prisoners” and was a “cynical window dressing to ‘promote’ a positive image without adequate support or resources; a massive missed opportunity to involve families and change the culture in prisons; [and] makes Cinderella look like a favourite and indulged child!”

However, family support staff also highlighted the more positive features of the way the post worked at their establishments. Many commented on how having FCDOs in post notably improved relations between prisoners, families, and staff, and how this in turn meant better quality visits. Others mentioned the support and commitment from staff – both FCDOs and others – for their work. Some also commented on the flexibility of their roles to develop it

according to local needs. One mentioned the benefits of having the FCDO office in the visits room, where they were easily accessible to both families and prisoners. A civilian family link worker said this independence was beneficial. A comment from one manager summarised the overall responses, saying the best thing was the “visible enjoyment of fathers and children in [parent/child visits], improved relationships between staff, prisoners, partners, and children. [The work] creates an awareness of prisoners as fathers/partners who have needs, concerns [and] anxieties just like everyone else.”

Finally, staff were asked to name one thing that would improve the effectiveness of the post. Again, the staff emphasised the importance of having enough time and staffing to cover the post and to ensure continuity of provision. Prisons without full-time FCDOs argued for full-time posts, whilst those with full-time FCDOs wanted to be left in post to do the job. Some FCDOs said that consistency of visits staff was also important. Equal in importance to being given enough time to do the job, however, was commitment from staff – both FCDOs and other officers – to do the job well:

[The FCDO] must be approachable and a good PR person when dealing with the public, as when dealing with them he is the face and voice of the Prison Service.

You can have the best visit facilities in the country... but if the people controlling that area are devoid of compassion you might as well close it down. The enthusiasm of staff drives initiatives, [and] the support of senior managers provides the staff with the power to make change.

Prisoners reiterated this in the group discussions, saying that specific staff make the difference – those who are “not just FCDOs in name”, but those “willing to devote time and energy to the job”.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Imprisonment has a damaging impact on more than just the prisoner. Over half of male prisoners and more than a third of female prisoners were living with a partner prior to imprisonment (Social Exclusion Unit 2002). Two-thirds of female prisoners have dependent children under the age of 18. Between 35-40 per cent of male young offenders and 35 per cent of female young offenders are parents. Roughly 150,000 children in the UK are affected by the imprisonment of a parent each year, 17,000 of these by the imprisonment of a mother.

Prisoners' families have responded extremely positively to family support work provided by Family Contact Development Officers in Scotland and elsewhere. They have demonstrated that there is considerable potential for a system which addressed their needs. In reviewing the role of FCDOs in one prison, its Operations Manager commented:

How can you balance, on the one hand, the needs of managing visits from members of the public to a maximum-security penal establishment, and at the same time, facilitate relaxed and meaningful contact between a man and his family? ... The existence of the FCDO at [prison] goes a long way towards achieving this goal and balancing these two objectives.... I am well aware of the barrier which can exist between staff, visitors and prisoners, and I am pleased to recognise that in the role of FCDO we have people here ... who have gone as far as anyone in the SPS to break down this barrier.

(Family Contact and Development Team 2000: Foreword 2)

This report has shown, through an exploration of the work of family support staff throughout the UK, that prisoners' families are in great need of support which prison staff are well-placed to provide. Responses to the research repeatedly showed equal evidence of benefits to families, prison regimes and security. Where families, prisoners, and staff are able to break down barriers, the rewards will be evident through better communication and reduced tension in virtually every aspect of prison life.

What is more, particular groups of prisoners – such as young offenders with no family, who have been in care, vulnerable young parents, or those whose visits have broken down, have a member of staff who can address their needs and represent their interests.

If prisoners, families, and prison staff are to benefit from this work, however, FCDOs cannot be viewed as an 'optional extra'. Simply labelling an officer or civilian staff member as a family support worker is not enough. Several FCDOs who responded to the questionnaire felt the prison they were in was merely paying lip service to a command from headquarters. And staff must be those who are genuinely committed to the job. They must be given time to dedicate themselves to the job, and the resources to carry out the work in a meaningful, well-planned, and comprehensive manner. A dedicated telephone line and a base to work from are imperative if they are to be accessible to families and their work taken seriously by other staff.

Training in relevant issues such as child protection, should be available and accessible. Support from managers and from other staff, both in theory and in practice, must be made available. Links with others in the prison such as resettlement staff, social work or probation staff, and staff in Visitors' Centres, should be developed, as should links with relevant outside organisations. While family officers do not (and arguably should not) need to be carbon

copies of each other; links with those in other prisons, formally and informally, would be beneficial.

The Minister for Justice in Scotland acknowledged the shortfalls in the role of FCDOs in her address to a conference organised by Families Outside in 2004. Nevertheless she emphasised the need to continue such work and to develop it more fully:

More work is still needed to ensure that the benefits from [FCDOs] are maximised. But we are getting there.... The current situation is still far from perfect. But progress is being made. I am determined that we should have the best services we can to reduce reoffending for the benefit of our communities. And for the benefit of the families who put up with the consequences of crime on a daily basis. We need the best support services. And we need the best criminal justice services. We need integrated services for the management of sentenced offenders.

(Families Outside 2004: 3)

In Scotland's new Criminal Justice Plan 'Supporting Safer, Stronger Communities' (2004) emphasis is placed on the importance of getting the transition right between prison and the community. In 5.7 it states that:

We know that support at the right time, particularly when an offender leaves prison, is crucial in influencing future offending behaviour. Our criminal justice system must provide for the seamless management of individual offenders and in particular perform better at these points of transition. We need to help an offender to preserve or improve his or her home circumstances, family and employment prospects, and to tackle addictions during a sentence. This work must be followed through after release into the community.

(Scottish Executive 2004)

Support for families of prisoners is not about staff being 'soft' or just about 'being nice' to prisoners. As mentioned at the outset, prisoners who are able to maintain links with their families are less likely to reoffend after release. Research elsewhere (Khokhryakov 1989) has suggested that people in prison, as they are separated from family and friends, may use other prisoners as a surrogate family or perceive of staff as the opposing group in an ongoing battle between 'us' and 'them.' Separation from family and friends increases prisoners' sense of alienation between themselves and the rest of society. Is it possible, then, that encouraging ties between prisoners and their families, wherever possible, reduces divisions between prisoners and staff, and between offenders and society?

This report did not evaluate the work of family support staff, nor did it measure outcomes. What it did was show the effects of employing family officers on prisoners, family, and staff, both when it worked well and when the role was virtually non-existent. The findings showed that the job of Family Contact Development Officer is a complex one, which varies depending on the prison, the needs of the prisoners in a prison, and the prisoners' families. Having family support staff in the prison can be a lifeline for some family members; these staff are often their only means of contacting urgently their loved ones, of learning about the prison regime, and of providing informed support. Although it is just a beginning, this research demonstrates that family support is a job worth doing well.

Since carrying out the initial research family support workers have been recruited at HMP Grendon and Springhill, HMPs Parc, Gloucester; Canterbury and Chelmsford, as well as HMYOs Reading, Glen Parva and Warren Hill. There have also been further developments in

the Eastern Region and increased opportunities for family work in the south west of England initiated by PACT. However, the Prison Service in England and Wales is showing no signs of making the case for family support workers across the board, despite pressure to do so from voluntary organisations working in the field. Though dedicated Race Relations Liaison Officers, Foreign National Officers and Disability Liaison Officers are increasingly common, family support workers are still very rare, though in some cases visitors' centre co-ordinators, chaplains, probation and personal officers, are covering similar areas of work.

During this review recommendations were developed, and a powerful case made for the role of family contact development officer to be introduced on a formal, statutory basis in prisons in England and Wales.

At the very least the post should be underpinned by ring-fenced funding and allocated a minimum number of hours per week as is the case for Race Relations Liaison Officers. There should be a dedicated office and confidential telephone line, preferably adjacent to, or near the visits room or visitors' centre – if a prison has one.

Family contact work, including child protection protocols, should be made an integral part of prison officer training, both in the contracted out and state sector. Training should be ongoing and involve visitors' centre staff (where an establishment has a centre) and voluntary and community organisations working with prisoners' families. Networks between resettlement, probation and visitors' centre staff and between other prisons should be established to encourage sharing of good practice and provide inter-prison support.

A performance target, or Prison Service standard, should be introduced to make sure family liaison work is an integral part of the prison regime and is evaluated. The Chief Inspector of Prison's 'Expectations' (2004) can be used as a guideline for minimum expectations of work with prisoners' families. Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) should monitor specifically the extent and quality of family liaison work.

FCDOs should have a public presence, which means that families and prisoners know who they are. They should be easily contactable. Although working to the prison they should be seen as independent and impartial. Decisions about the wearing of uniforms, or civilian clothes, will need to be made in the light of this. Staff should be chosen for their commitment to, and experience in, giving support and information to prisoners' families.

Clear, accurate information and relevant translations, for offenders and their families should be available from point of arrest through the court process, in prison, and as preparation for resettlement in the community.

Scotland have pioneered the development of the Family Contact Development Officer post and SPS is to be congratulated on this.

The findings of this research point to the need for SPS to build on the good practice identified and secure the essential stability and continuity of these posts in order to make them fully effective. Such a recommendation was made in the Thematic Inspection: The importance of Visits in Scottish Prisons (CIP 1996).

The full implementation of the post of National Family Support and Social Care Manager should assist in developing a more standardised approach to the role, the sharing of best practice and also maintain a strategic focus on an area of work which has traditionally been vulnerable to changing priorities and funding pressures.

The new SPS Inclusion policies and developing themes of Scotland's Criminal Justice plan indicate that the ongoing debate about the range and extent FCDO work could be located within a much broader strategy - inside and outside the prison walls - for the support and involvement of families.

This approach also has implications for the development of policy in England and Wales.

If the focus shifts to the desirable outcomes for families in terms of information, support and involvement then there may well be different ways of achieving this dependent on local variables. Such an approach would give the FCDO a pivotal role whilst all others in the system - from those who answer the prison switchboard onwards would understand and exercise their own responsibilities for recognising and supporting families as partners in the care and reintegration of their relative.

Finally, the effects of overcrowding on the capacity for a prison to support families cannot be ignored. Whilst prisoners are being moved regularly around the system (the 'churn'), and people are being held further and further from their homes, relationships with families will suffer. If any of the findings of this report are to be carried forward and implemented, the issue of increasing prison numbers must be challenged throughout the UK.

APPENDIX I

Review of the Role of Family Contact Development Officers

Questionnaire for FCDOs

The Prison Reform Trust is doing a short piece of research into the role Family Contact Development Officers. This is NOT an evaluation, but a small exploratory project designed to inform practice.

To save time and inconvenience for the prisons and staff, we are collecting preliminary data with the questions below. A small number of establishments will then be followed up for more in-depth visits.

Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible, and no later than **Wednesday 31 July**, via e-mail or to the address below. Many thanks in advance for your help!

Background

1) Name of establishment: _____

2) How many officers are designated as FCDOs in this prison? _____

3) How many of those, if any, are allocated to the post full time? _____

4) a) In theory, is an FCDO available in the prison at all times?

yes no

b) If not, what shifts are left uncovered?

evenings weekends other (please specify):

c) If an FCDO is not available at all times in practice, why is this? (please tick all that apply)

not in shift pattern taken away from post to cover duties elsewhere

no designated FCDOs other (please specify):

Information about FCDOs1) How do prisoners find out about FCDOs? *(please tick all that apply)*

- in court at reception on induction
 from personal officer posters/leaflets word of mouth
 other (please specify):

2) How do families find out about FCDOs? *(please tick all that apply)*

- in court from prisoner during Family Induction
 from prisoner's personal officer posters/leaflets
 from other visitors other (please specify):

3) a) Do FCDOs at your prison run or participate in any kind of induction for prisoners?

- yes no
 there is an induction, but no participation from FCDOs

b) How useful do you think prisoner induction from FCDOs is/would be?

- very useful fairly useful not very useful

Please explain: _____

4) Do FCDOs at your prison run or participate in any kind of induction for families?

- yes no
 there is an induction, but no participation from FCDOs

b) How useful do you think family induction from FCDOs is/would be?

- very useful fairly useful not very useful

Please explain: _____

If you produce any leaflets or other written information for prisoners or visitors, or any other relevant information please attach them and return them with your completed questionnaire.

Selection and training

1) How are FCDOs selected in this prison? *(please tick all that apply)*

volunteer for it assigned to the post other (please specify):

2) Who provides training for the FCDOs? *(please tick all that apply)*

training within the prison the Prison Service College
 Scottish Forum/Families Outside no specific training
 other (please specify):

3) What kind of training do FCDOs receive for the role, if any? *(please tick all that apply)*

basic duties of FCDOs only needs of prisoners' families
 child protection issues other (please specify):

4) In your opinion, what additional training (if any) would be helpful for FCDOs?

5) What information do other staff receive about FCDOs? *(please tick all that apply)*

word of mouth articles in staff newsletters
 included in basic training package other (please specify):

Work of FCDOs

1) a) Does the post of FCDO at your establishment have a formal job description?

yes (please attach) no don't know

b) if yes: How does the job compare in practice to the formal job description? (What differs, if anything?)

c) if no: what are the basic duties of the job?

2) Briefly, what would you say is your main purpose?

3) How do you feel the FCDO's role could be changed, if at all?

4) a) How do prisoners make contact with FCDOs in your establishment if they wish?
(please tick all that apply)

ask an officer fill in a requests/complaints form
 direct approach to FCDO other (please specify):

b) How many requests for contact do you receive from prisoners in an average week?

c) Are requests for contact with prisoners recorded formally?

yes no sometimes

d) What are the usual reasons prisoners have for wanting contact with an FCDO?
(please tick all that apply)

concern about a family member/visitor financial assistance for visitors
 arrange special visits/Child-Centred visits other (please specify):

e) Are reasons for contact with prisoners recorded?

yes no sometimes

5) a) How do families/visitors make contact with FCDOs in your establishment if they wish? (please tick all that apply)

ring the prison switchboard ring the FCDO office directly
 request in writing to FCDO approach FCDO in person
 other (please specify):

b) How many requests for contact do you receive from families/visitors in an average week?

c) Are requests for contact with families/visitors recorded formally?

yes no sometimes

d) What are the usual reasons families/visitors have for wanting contact with an FCDO?
(please tick all that apply)

concern re: prisoner's welfare financial assistance for visits
general information about visits other (please specify):

e) Are reasons for contact with families/visitors recorded?

yes no sometimes

6) What are FCDOs there doing, if anything, to encourage visits from families who are not visiting? (e.g. literature/outreach work) *(please tick all that apply)*

distribute literature/leaflets outside the prison outreach work
 monitor which prisoners do not receive visits
 contact with social work/probation staff other (please specify):

7) What methods of feedback or monitoring do you have for your work as an FCDO? *(please tick all that apply)*

informal feedback only suggestion box for visitors
 questionnaires for visitors questionnaires for prisoners
 comparison with FCDOs at other prisons none
 other (please specify):

8) a) If the post of FCDO did not exist at your prison, what do you feel would be lost?

b) If the post did not exist, do you feel other staff could make up for this?

yes to some extent no

Please explain: _____

9) If possible, give two examples (without giving names) where you feel the work of the FCDO has made a positive difference to a prisoner and/or to a prisoner's family (attach additional sheet if necessary):

Links with others

1) a) Does your prison have a Visitors' Centre?

yes

no

b) if yes: what kind of contact does the FCDO have with the Centre, if any?

(please tick all that apply)

informal contact only

regular minuted meetings

FCDO posted in the Centre

run/participate in clinics for visitors

other (please specify):

2) What links do FCDOs there have with resettlement staff? *(please tick all that apply)*

informal contact only

regular minuted meetings

shared line manager

other (please specify):

3) What links do FCDOs there have with social work/probation staff?

(please tick all that apply)

informal contact only

regular minuted meetings

shared line manager

other (please specify):

Overview

1) What would you say are the biggest hindrances to the work of FCDOs in your prison?

2) What would you say are the best things about how the FCDO post operates at your prison?

3) What would you say is the most important thing needed to make the post of FCDO work well?

4) Any further comments?

Please send the completed questionnaire by Wednesday 31 July to:

Thanks for your help!

APPENDIX 2:

Group interview schedule – Prisoners

What do you think FCDOs are for?

How did you learn about the FCDOs?

Have you ever made contact with the FCDOs?

If not, why not?

If you have made contact with an FCDO:

Were they able to help? How?

Would you recommend contacting an FCDO to someone else? Why or why not?

Have any of your families had contact with an FCDO?

If yes, what did they say about it (a good experience/helpful, or not)?

What do you think an FCDO should do for prisoners? for families?

What else do you think the prison could be doing generally to improve contact between you and your family?

If you are not receiving visits, is there anything you feel the prison could be doing to help this/change this?

APPENDIX 3

Job description – National Social Care and Family Support Manager (Scotland)

General Management

- To input into policy development nationally and in establishments as a specialist support advisor on family and social care matters.
- Project manage the development of key initiatives in agreement with the principles of Inclusion and the SPS Correctional Agenda.
- Ensure regular checks are carried out on all areas of responsibility, e.g. Audit of Visits, implementation of social care plans etc.
- Provide support to the Board of Families Outside and other related agencies as required.

Families & Social Care Advisory Management

- Provide the Director of Rehabilitation and Care and their senior management team, GIC's and members of establishments with relevant information, e.g. relevant research and statistics.
 - Assist and advise establishments with planning in relation to Family & Social Care and Development.
 - Advise on the formulation of national and local policy in relation to Family & Social Care development.
 - Consult internally within the SPS to obtain relevant information and practice, e.g. with SW Adviser, Establishments, the Board etc.
 - Consult externally to obtain relevant information e.g. media, courts, Scottish Executive, external agencies.
 - To oversee on behalf of the SPS, the services provided by the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) and ensure financial regularity, value for money and quality of service.
 - To ensure that establishments include a family and social care focus and strategy in inclusion policies and in the respective Links Centre models.
 - Collate and present information reports as appropriate.
 - Compare current practices and make recommendations for development.
 - Monitor and evaluate responses to key initiatives/issues.
 - Provide the SPS with feedback on issues/initiatives by monitoring internal and external environments.
 - Promote the idea of designing change initiatives around achieving measurable objectives.
 - To ensure that establishments and Directorates reflect the importance of Family & Social Care in line with the correctional agenda and that an appropriate strategy is included in any planning process.
-

APPENDIX 4

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations (2004)

Family and friends

Prisoners are encouraged to maintain contact with family and friends through regular access to mail, telephones and visits.

Expectation

Prisoners are encouraged and helped to maintain contact with their families and friends, except in situations where contact is assessed as inappropriate.

Evidence Reference

Questionnaire BOP 19

Staff: personal officers. SMR 37 & 79

Documentation: check individual prisoner records. Prisoners should be EPR 43(1) informed of their visits entitlement within the first 24 hours of arrival. PR 4(1) If prisons routinely hold high numbers of primary carers, e.g. women, full time family support workers or social workers should be employed. Check if there is an avenue for family/friends to contribute to sentence plans.

Observation: check provision is made for foreign nationals in lieu of visits, prisoners with disabilities or learning difficulties and mentally ill or elderly prisoners. Check that prisoners with family members who are also in custody are able to maintain telephone contact.

Prisoners: individual interviews.

Prisoners and their immediate family or partners, with appropriate instructions or permission, are sensitively informed of significant news about each other within 24 hours.

Evidence Reference

Staff: ask about recent examples and procedures used e.g. what constitutes SMR 44 'significant news'? EPR 49

Prisoners: individual interviews if appropriate.

Expectation – mail

Prisoners can send as many letters as they can afford and no restrictions are placed on the number of letters that can be received.

Evidence Reference

Questionnaire BOP 19

Staff: ask residential staff about wing policy. SMR 37 & 79

Documentation: check that foreign national prisoners can exchange two EPR 43(1) & 65(c)

ordinary letters for one airmail letter and that arrangements are in place for foreign national prisoners to exchange two airmail letters for one phone call.

Prisoners: speak to foreign national prisoners in particular about their understanding of their entitlements.

Prisoners' outgoing mail is posted within 24 hours (48 hours when received on Saturday) and incoming mail is received within 24 hours of arrival at the prison, including registered and recorded mail.

Evidence

Questionnaire

Documentation: check instructions to landing staff. Check how long it takes for credit to appear in prisoners' accounts.

Staff: speak to staff on wings about normal procedure, especially with regard to incoming parcels.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations 54

Prisoners' mail is only opened to check for unauthorised enclosures or to carry out legitimate or targeted censorship.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check instructions to censors – 5% of mail should be ICCPR 17 randomly opened and read unless the prisoner is targeted for 100% reading. ECHR 8

Staff: speak to censors, whether officers on wing or OSGs off the wing. PR 6(1)

Legally privileged correspondence is not opened by staff.

Evidence Reference

Questionnaire ICCPR 17

Prisoners: groups. BOP 18(3)

Documentation: if legally privileged mail is opened by staff, check this is PR 39 recorded systematically. ECHR, Campbell

Cross-reference with legal rights inspector v UK

ECHR, Demirtepe v France

ECHR, Labita v Italy

ECHR, Puzinas v Lithuania

Expectation – telephones

Prisoners have daily access to telephones and calls are charged at the cheapest possible national rates. Prisoners can conduct their phone calls in privacy.

Evidence Reference

Observation: check for use of phone hoods or booths. SMR 37

Documentation: check documented access to telephones, check that EPR 43(1) foreign national prisoners can spend a minimum of £10 over their IEP level on phonecards/credits. Foreign national prisoners should be able to buy the cheapest available international phone cards.

Prisoners: ask in groups, speak to foreign national prisoners.

There is a notice next to all phones advising prisoners that their calls may be monitored.

Evidence

Observation: check phones on all residential units.

Prisoners can use the telephone at times that are arranged in advance and will be convenient to the recipient of the call (including those abroad).

Evidence Reference

Questionnaire SMR 79

Prisoners: interviews. EPR 43(1)

Staff: ask about normal policy and special circumstances e.g. foreign national prisoners.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations 55

Prisoners are able to receive their first visit within one week of admission and thereafter are able to receive at least one visit a week for a minimum of one hour. There is no upper limit set on the number of visits a remand prisoner is entitled to.

Evidence Reference

Questionnaire BOP 19

Documentation: check visits schedule, check that foreign nationals are able SMR 37 to exchange their visits entitlements for telephone calls – 1 x 10 min call EPR 43(1) & per visit. Check whether prisoners on basic level of IEP scheme get less 44(1) than their legal requirement.

Staff: speak to visits staff.

Prisoners: speak to foreign national prisoners in particular.

Prisoners can take advantage of an accumulated visits scheme.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check policy especially in dispersal prisons and category SMR 79 B prisons, or for vulnerable prisoners and foreign nationals. Compare how many applications are made for accumulated visits against how many actually take place.

Prisoners: interviews.

Vulnerable prisoners who are voluntarily segregated are not disadvantaged in their access to visits.

Evidence Reference

Observation: check for separate visits accommodation or an efficient rota SMR 37 & 79 system, which gives the same access as for all other prisoners. BOP 19

Prisoners: interviews.

Prisoners are not deprived of their statutory entitlement to visits as a punishment.

Evidence Reference

Observation: check with those on basic regime and in segregation. ICCPR 17

Staff: speak to staff about policy on punishments. ECHR 8

Cross-reference with IEP inspector SMR 32(2) & 57

Arrangements are in place for prisoners to receive additional visits where a need is identified.

Evidence Reference

Prisoners: interviews. SMR 37 & 79

Staff: ask about recent incidents of additional visits. EPR 43(1)

Observation: check for extended or all day visits for prisoners with young PR 35(3) children. Information about the Assisted Prison Visits Unit and Prisoners' Families Helpline should be prominently displayed.

Efforts should be made to assist prisoners who have family a long way away, or in other countries, to maintain good family contact.

Evidence

Prisoners: interviews – especially with those who do not receive many/any visits and those with family abroad.

Staff: speak to resettlement manager.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations 56

The visits booking system is accessible and able to deal with the number and needs of visitors. Visitors can book the next visit before the current visit ends.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check visits booked in advance during visits. SMR 79

Observation: during inspection, call visits line to check accessibility. EPR 43(1)

Visitors: speak to visitors about their experiences.

Prisoners' visitors are given information about how to get to the establishment, its visiting hours and details about what visitors can expect when they arrive.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check the information that is distributed. SMR 37 & 79

Observation: EPR 43(1)

PR 4(1)

If public transport stops some distance from the establishment, transport arrangements are in place for visitors to get to and from the prison.

Evidence Reference

Staff: ask about use of coach/mini-bus if appropriate. EPR 43(1)

Observation: check transport is in operation. PR 4(1)

All procedures for prisoners and visitors are carried out efficiently before and after visits, to ensure that the visit is neither delayed nor curtailed.

Evidence Reference

Prisoners: ask in groups. BOP 19

Observation: check actual opening times of visits against the scheduled EPR 43(1) times. PR 4(1)

The searching of prisoners, visitors and their property is conducted in a religiously and culturally sensitive way. The searching of children is undertaken with particular sensitivity. Strip searching of prisoners is carried out only for well-evidenced security reasons.

Evidence Reference

Observation: observe normal searching procedures, including that BOP 19 undertaken by drugs dogs. EPR 33 & 43(1)

Prisoners: ask in groups. SMR 27

Cross-reference with security and rules inspector PR 4 (1) & 41(2) & (3)

If visitors have not arrived within 15 minutes of the start of the visit, visits staff try and find out why and inform the prisoner. Visitors arriving late are allowed to continue with their visit.

Evidence Reference

Staff: ask visits staff about procedures in relation to this. BOP 19

Prisoner: interviews if appropriate. EPR 43(1) PR 4(1)

Visits staff are aware of the concerns facing prisoners' families, especially the impact of visits on children and any emotionally charged situations that may occur during or after a visit.

Evidence Reference

Observation: assess how well visits are handled by staff, check during SMR 46(1) & 79 visits that efforts are made to make visits a positive experience, especially PR 4(1) for children.

Staff: ask staff how they react to certain sets of circumstances and whether there is any specific training available for visits staff.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations 57

Visitors are able to share any concerns they have about the prisoner with visits staff or visitors' centre staff.

Evidence Reference

Observation: watch the interaction between staff and visitors. SMR 46(1) & 79

Staff: ask staff if this has occurred. PR 11(1)

Visitors: ask visitors if they consider staff approachable and what they would do if they had concerns.

Evening visits and family days are available.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check if available and check the frequency and numbers BOP 19 of prisoners involved. EPR 43(1)

Staff: ask about procedure. PR 4(1)

Observation

Closed visits are authorised only when there is a significant risk justified by security intelligence. They are not used as a punishment and allocations to closed visits are reviewed at least monthly.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check duration and reasons behind use of closed visits. SMR 27 & 57

Prisoners: interviews. EPR 33

Cross-reference with security and rules inspector

Prisoners can request a visit from a volunteer prison visitor who should be trained and well supported.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check formal system of applications, check on the use of BOP 19 prison visitors and the arrangements for foreign nationals who do not EPR 43(1) speak English.

Staff: ask about recent use of volunteer prison visitors.

Visitors and prisoners are able to give staff feedback on the visit, suggest improvements and, if necessary, complain using an available complaints procedure.

Evidence Reference

Documentation: check for evidence of feedback forms. BOP 33 SMR 36(1) & (3)

A well-run visitors' centre is available alongside the establishment and is open at least an hour before and an hour after advertised visiting times.

Evidence Reference

Observation SMR 79

Staff: ask about normal procedure.

During, after and while waiting for visits, prisoners and visitors, whether with disabilities or able-bodied, have access to toilet facilities.

Evidence Reference

Observation BOP 1

Staff: ask about normal procedure.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations 58

Visits areas are staffed, furnished and arranged to ensure easy contact between prisoners and their families or friends. Security arrangements in visits do not unnecessarily encroach upon privacy.

Evidence Reference

Observation: check levels of supervision are not excessive and general SMR 27 & 79 layout of visits area is appropriate. Furniture should be in a good condition. EPR 43(1) PR 4(1)

Children are safe and can enjoy family visits in an environment that is sensitive to their needs. A children's activity area is provided where children can be supervised by trained staff and where prisoners can play with their children.

Evidence Reference

Observation: check activity area is suitable and speak to staff. ICCPR 23

Documentation: check for arrangements to ensure that schedule one EPR 43(1) offenders and others subject to public protection measures do not come PR 4(1) into contact with children during visits.

Prisoners' families can buy a range of refreshments during visits.

Evidence

Observation: check snack machines/shop are sufficiently stocked and in operation.

See also:

Bullying: Prisoners' families and friends are encouraged, through local arrangements, to provide vital sources of information, which may help identify those prisoners likely to be bullied/bullies or who have a history of self-harming behaviour.

Courts, escorts and transfers: Prisoners are given 24 hours' notice of planned transfers, in order to make a telephone call to their family, next of kin and/or their legal adviser. (Subject to security considerations.)

First days in custody (reception and first night): Prisoners are informed of their entitlement to letters, telephone calls and visits. It is made clear to them that mail is monitored and that telephone calls may be recorded.

First days in custody (reception and first night): Prisoners are able to make one free telephone call in private on reception or on their first night location. This opportunity is documented.

First days in custody (reception and first night): Prisoners are given a pack containing a telephone card or PIN phone credits and basic items. They are told how long the pack is expected to last, its cost and the system for repayment from their prison wages or private monies. Repayment methods do not affect future family contact.

Personal officers: Personal officers know the personal circumstances of their prisoners and, where necessary, act as points of contact with prisoners' families and encourage appropriate links with them.

Residential units: There is at least one telephone per 20 prisoners on each wing. Telephones are located in quiet areas with effective privacy hoods.

Security and rules: The criteria to ban visitors are visible and unambiguous, with an appeals process available. Those visitors subject to bans are reviewed every three months.

Self-harm and suicide: Prisoners' families and friends are encouraged, through local arrangements, to provide sources of information which may help identify those prisoners likely to be bullied or who have a history of self-harming behaviour.

Sentence and custody planning: Prisoners and, where appropriate, their families participate fully in the development and reviews of the custody or sentence plan and in preparation for release.

Time out of cell: Prisoners attending any out of cell activity are enabled to attend regularly and punctually. (Evidence: check daily routine allows enough time for prisoners to attend education, training, work, offending behaviour courses, visits and all other out of cell activities. Ensure staff are proactive in enabling prisoners to attend punctually and delays in returning roll etc. are not commonplace.)

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