

Family Matters

Maximising the key role of families in the justice system

A one day event held on 17TH MARCH 2010

Lothian & Borders Community Justice Authority and Families Outside hosted the Family Matters one day seminar on Wednesday 17th March 2010, at Newbattle Abbey College in Dalkeith.

Mr Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety was the guest speaker and opened the event with a thought-provoking Q&A session.



The focus of the day was to:

- Bring together CJA Partner organisations to underline the key role families have in the criminal justice system
- Understand how families can be engaged in terms of prevention and addressing their needs as a vulnerable group in their own right
- Review the role of families across the entire offender journey from arrest to imprisonment to reintegration into the community
- Establish how we can improve our multi agency processes



Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith

Dr Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive of Families Outside was the key note speaker for this event. Dr Loucks used her extensive knowledge to present the key facts and figures of why families are so important in an interactive quiz.

It was 'chocs away' for the winning answers but on a more serious note the presentation highlighted some significant issues for the families of people who are imprisoned and for the children in particular.



The question in this photo was in two parts with the first part asking- 'Can you guess to the nearest 1,000 how many visits are booked across the estate in 2009?'

The answer is **333,145 visits**
567,901 people

Part 2 of the question then asks- 'What percentage of these visits do you think will not actually take place?'

- ❖ Under 5%
- ❖ Under 20%
- ❖ Over 20%



(The answer can be found on page 3).

Some of the key issues highlighted by Dr Loucks were –

Mental health - **30% of children with a parent in prison develop significant mental health problems compared to 10% of children in the population in general**

Offending behaviour – **59% of boys with a convicted parent go on to be convicted themselves by age 32**

The scale of the issue – **16,500 children in Scotland have a parent go to prison each year This means that more children each year experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce**

Keeping in touch – **Half of prisoners lose contact with their families due to their imprisonment**

The seminar was attended by over 65 people from across 27 organisations providing a wealth and breadth of knowledge of all aspects of the criminal justice system. Many had not had the opportunity to work together before this event and it was a learning experience for everyone involved.

The CJA Families Strategic Group took a lead role in the three Workshops along with the assistance of five facilitators, all of whom have a range of experience within the justice system.

The Strategic Group members fed back the key points from each workshop. All of the information captured on the day will form an Action Plan which will be taken forward by the Strategic Group over the next year and they will provide the CJA with regular quarterly updates.



The 3 workshops were designed to:

- Develop a shared understanding of need
- Identify support and where there are gaps
- Establish what needs to be done within and between organisations



The groups were asked to feedback one or two key points from each workshop and this is detailed on Pages 4-6. Additional ideas were captured during the day and these will be brought together for the next Strategic Group meeting on 25 May 2010.

The Strategic Group covers a wide range of organisations and each member will take forward the action plan in his/her own organisation:

CHAIR – Dr Nancy Loucks

Alan Montgomery Salvation Army
Dina Aitken Scottish Legal Aid
Donny Scott Children & Families Social Work
Erica Nicholls Scottish Prison Service
Jim Royan Lothian & Borders Police
David Shand Scottish Courts

Harry Robertson
Fiona Allan
Nigel Ironside
Simon McLean
Tony Simpson
NHS Lothian

Criminal Justice Social Work
 Families Outside
 HMP Edinburgh
 Sacro
 HMP Addiewell
 New member to be confirmed

KEY POINTS FROM FAMILY MATTERS WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1 – Develop a shared understanding of need

GROUP 1

- Transport – Geographical spread, especially Borders. Both cost of travel and impact from Borders being a low income region
- Better use of video conferencing
- Written information / Data Protection Act – Consent is required from the prisoner to permit contact with his/her family – need to establish ease of obtaining this written information
- Police when carrying out an arrest need to be able to identify if there are children in the house
- Throughcare has huge role to play especially short term prisoners

GROUP 2

- Information sharing and signposting has to be properly supported
- Need to establish the key contact at each stage of criminal justice process
- Has there been previous exposure – i.e. level of awareness of family
- Immediacy is key / information to right people at right time

GROUP 3

- Prisoners families are invisible to agencies throughout the CJ process
- Families tend to be bystanders and marginalised
- Needs of families have to be clarified and better representation

GROUP 4

- Children & families are already the responsibility of local authorities therefore know the children in need and therefore can bring an understanding to agencies about the impact on children

GROUP 5

- Information at the right time to assist people to understand the process
- Agencies need to be clearer about their own role
- Need to challenge politicians by using the collective understanding of all agencies of the impact of short term sentences to support the proposed change to legislation – the impact on families is great therefore it is everyone's responsibility to make the new proposals work and give commitment to supporting this new policy.
- Continuity of Effort – all agencies are offender focused but every decision that is made will have an impact on their family – need to consider what the actual impact is for every decision made

WORKSHOP 2 – Identify support and where there are gaps

GROUP 1

- There is an over-emphasis on targets & KPI's (key performance indicators) especially in Social Work
- Good practice re visits – use 'non-authoritarian' venue e.g. Brunton Hall
- Other non CJ agencies have the same potential customer group (GP surgeries/Housing offices) – need them to have the appropriate information available too
- Key is knowing what services are available

GROUP 2

- Nobody 'owns' offenders families e.g. victims have Victim Support (highlight that families can also be victims)
- How do we 'catch' issues and problems if there is no clear 'owner'

GROUP 3

- Need more people to provide family support
- This additional layer could provide communication and support can come from peer support by training families and paying them to provide this service

GROUP 4

- How do we identify the families that need support? i.e. those people in prison whose imprisonment will have the greatest impact on their family and want/need support
- Recommend a single point of contact along the lines of MAPPA/GIRFEC

GROUP 5

- Lots of good work is already done but mainly at the point of crisis
- Services mainly deal with people in custody or on case management therefore can deal with issues during these limited periods
- How do we make information available and accessible at all times, not just when in crisis and service support required?

WORKSHOP 3 – Establish what needs to be done I within and between organisations

All GROUPS

- Recommend a national information resource which offers centralised service access including information on referrals.
- Information must be up to date and appropriate
- Need to 'push the agenda' in terms of Family Impact Statements, Progress Courts, Diversion
- Utilise Families Outside Helpline and possible design of volunteer services e.g. drivers for families on prison visits
- Influence the Police in respect of their pro-forma – use GIRFEC principles
- Huge gap in information etc. for families of people on Remand
- Acknowledge multidisciplinary model works well / need training and ability to share information across all services and families
- Use good working practice examples of other organisations e.g. - Scottish Legal Aid – travel to their customers (similar model of vehicle to Venture Trust mobile unit)
 - Shelter – use Brunton Hall for meetings rather than venue which may be stigmatising
- Better involvement of Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations in prison
- National basis for information and support – cost benefit
- Short term – build on role of Criminal Justice Social Work and Social Enquiry Reports – can use this process to engage with families but need to take into account non-SER cases and longer term solutions
- Medium term – further develop Visitors Centre as resource for families through peer support
- Longer term – formally take families into account in sentencing (requires legislation)

If you would like more information on Family Matters, any copies of the presentations or the materials that were provided on the day, please contact Lothian & Borders Community Justice Authority (see contact details below).



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