



**Helping prisoners maintain family relationships and supporting children and families affected by imprisonment:**

## **Evaluation of the Integrated Family Support Programme in the North East**

Funded by:



The Pilgrim Trust

June 2013

## Comments about the project

*"Honestly, I think your kids are the most important thing in your life ... my head's been battered ... but it's better now".*

Prisoner who had not seen his daughter for two years and is now receiving regular visits from her

*"It's the hardest thing about being in jail, being away from your children".*

Prisoner with an eight year sentence

*"There is no typical day ... one minute I'm arranging a child parent visit, the next I'm telling a mother that their child has been placed in foster care".*

FSW talking about their work

*"It's [Hidden Sentence] has created more empathy ... if a child is missing school or play sessions, if the family is preparing for the return of a prisoner, if mam is anxious ... we can understand the stress and behaviour and help them".*

LSCB Officer

*"The number of things that have got to do with a prisoner's family is incredible".*

DART Worker

*"I really felt very lonely until now".*

Prisoner near the end of a eight year sentence, most of which was in a high security prison

*"Seems a bit stupid that no one's done it before [provided family support]".*

Prisoner, on remand

## **Acknowledgements**

We have a series of people to thank for the investment that has been committed to this evaluation. Firstly, we would like to thank personnel from the prisons who permitted us to carry out interviews inside the establishments and also for giving up their time for their own interviews. Secondly we would like to thank the prisoners who spoke freely and openly about often private matters. Thirdly, thank you to those community based professionals who gave up their time. Lastly, we would like to thank the FSWs themselves for setting up interviews with prisoners and staff in the context of part time hours and a complex work setting and for giving their time in interviews.

## **About NEPACS**

NEPACS has been working in the North East of England for 130 years. NEPACS works to build bridges between prisoners, their families and the communities that they will return to upon their release. NEPACS strongly believe that investment must be made in resettlement and rehabilitation to ensure that there are fewer victims of crime in the future, and less prospect of family life being disrupted and destroyed by a prison sentence. More recently, NEPACS has developed significant expertise in a new work stream and are now established as a voluntary sector provider of prison based family support services, representing significant value for money.

More information: [www.nepacs.co.uk](http://www.nepacs.co.uk)



## **About the authors**

Barefoot Research and Evaluation is a social research organisation based in Newcastle upon Tyne. It has particular expertise in work in the Criminal Justice System, reducing reoffending and improving outcomes for children and families. Barefoot Research and Evaluation has carried out work for Community Safety Partnerships, local authorities, National Offender Management Service and the voluntary sector on initiatives to improve community safety, reduce crime and reoffending and support troubled families. Dr. Christopher Hartworth, who set up Barefoot, has 20 years' experience of research and evaluation, beginning in developing countries in poverty alleviation programmes and continuing in the North East of England in work with disadvantaged communities. Joanne Hartworth has a First Class Honours Degree in Sociology, is a qualified teacher and an accomplished project manager, having managed literacy projects in East and West Newcastle.

More information: [www.barefootresearch.org.uk](http://www.barefootresearch.org.uk)



## **i Executive summary**

NEPACS has developed an Integrated Family Support Programme that works in prisons and in the community across the North East of England. NEPACS currently has Family Support Workers (FSWs) in four prisons in the North East and two Integrated Family Support Advocates (IFSAs) working across 12 North East local authority areas. This began in 2011 with a number of funding sources and has recently been awarded Big Lottery funding until 2016. This is an evaluation of the first phase of that work.

The objective of the FSWs is to increase the contact and improve the relationship between the prisoner and their children and family. They do this by working with prisoners and visitors, to help them overcome a range of family-related problems. The objective of the IFSAs is to build capacity and encourage local authority agencies to deliver services to prisoners' families. This is done through policy and strategy development, facilitation and coordination of agencies using a partnership approach. The aims of all this work are to improve outcomes for children and reducing reoffending.

### **Outputs**

Between January 2011 and March 2013, the FSWs at all prisons have provided support to a total of 652 prisoners and 161 visitors. Between June 2011 and May 2013, the IFSAs have worked in every North East local authority, have worked across Children's Services, family support and criminal justice agencies and have developed a number of policy and operational mechanisms which aim to improve the services delivered to the children and families of offenders. They have also developed awareness and understanding of issues affecting children and families who are affected by imprisonment through the delivery of Hidden Sentence training.

### **Impacts**

We have found that the Family Support Work has:

- Increased contact between a prisoner and their children and family.
- Increased children and family provision in prisons.
- Resulted in self reported outcomes of a reduction in reoffending and increased happiness and well being of children.
- Improved prisoner behaviour and the mental health and well being of prisoners.

The Integrated Family Support Advocates have:

- Increased the awareness of the issues faced by children and families of prisoners as a result of the Hidden Sentence training.

- Created new policies within Children's Services and criminal justice agencies (for example, Integrated Offender Management and Probation) to support children and families of prisoners.
- Changed working practices of Children's Services to begin to try and support children and families of prisoners.
- Created a focus and a workstream on the children and families of offenders where there was previously none.

For the prisons, the project has:

- Resulted in a prison population that is calmer and easier to manage.
- Introduced a valued addition to the prison regime which has also impacted on changing a hard edged prison culture in certain establishments.
- Has changed and influenced the prison regimes to be more family friendly, including more training for staff and more family provision for prisoners.
- Energised, added value to and in some cases started the Children and Families Pathway.

For local authorities, the work has:

- Provided a valuable source of advice and expertise, where none previously existed.
- Stimulated new work areas which have improved performance in targeted areas of support, for example in Troubled Families.
- Improved and increased cooperation and coordination of services particularly between children and families and criminal justice agencies.

## **Conclusion**

These multifaceted and wide reaching impacts indicate that the evidence base upon which this programme was developed was sound and well informed (i.e. NEPACS found a need, developed a workstream and delivered that work and the impacts were numerous). They also confirm that NEPACS new area of expertise in prison based family support and family advocacy is effective in improving outcomes for prisoners and their families, i.e. NEPACS is achieving what it set out to do. We also see that there is an appetite for this work in both the prisons and in the community. Stakeholders feel it is good and worthwhile work to be involved in.

However, it needs to be pointed out that there is much more work to be done to continue the work across the region. Worthy targets would be to standardise policy and provision across the 12 North East local authorities and to have a FSW in each prison in the North East. A solution also needs to be found to identifying families affected by imprisonment in the community.

## **Recommendations**

On the basis of this evaluation, we make several recommendations:

- In order to get a robust measure of the project's impact on reducing reoffending, we need to follow those who have received support and compare them (and their future offending) to a cohort who have not, or to the national average. We need to access data on individual prisoners supported, after a period of 12 months (the standard measure of reoffending) from the Police National Computer.
- The Advocates need to monitor the impact of their work on changing practice. This would necessitate contacting those agencies who have been worked with at regular intervals to ask them if there has been any practice changes and importantly how many families affected by imprisonment have been supported.
- The project needs to pay continued attention to the support of the FSWs. It can be a difficult and sometimes emotionally demanding job, which requires a good level of support and opportunities for sharing experiences.
- There needs to be FSWs in HMP Durham and HMP Northumberland.
- In order to provide adequate levels of support to both FSWs and local authority areas, the IFSWs should be increased to two full time equivalent staff (they currently have 1.5 full time equivalents).

## **Final note**

This NEPACS delivered programme is complex and far reaching and as such has considerable detail in its delivery. The executive summary presents just the headline findings. We therefore invite you to read or at least leaf through the main body of the report to get an idea of its complexity and reach in both the region's prisons and in the community.

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## 1.0 Introduction

NEPACS has developed an Integrated Family Support Programme that works in prisons and in the community across the North East of England. This began in 2011 with funding from the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The DfE funded community-based Integrated Family Support Advocates (IFSAs, 1.5 Full Time Equivalents) between March 2011 and July 2013. NOMS funded prison-based Family Support Workers (FSWs, two Full Time Equivalents) between March 2011 and December 2012.

This was part of a national programme implemented in partnership with the Prison After Care Trust. NEPACS delivered the work in the North East and pact delivered the work based in the south of England and in Wales. In the latter, there are four IFSAs and eight FSWs - the locations of the work are presented in table 1.1.

In the North East, the programme has grown and expanded. The NOMS funded FSWs added to a FSW funded by LankellyChase Foundation and the Pilgrim Trust (which pre-dated this work by six months) located at HMP & YOI Low Newton (a female prison). In 2012, Stockton Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) funded FSWs for HMP Holme House and HMP Kirkclevington (1.5 Full Time Equivalents).

Therefore, NEPACS currently has FSWs working in four prisons in the North East and two IFSAs working across 12 North East local authority areas. This is an evaluation of that work.

Briefly, the objective of the FSWs is to increase the contact and improve the relationship between the prisoner and their children and family; the objective of the IFSAs is to build capacity and encourage local authority agencies to deliver services to prisoners' families. The aims of this work are to improve outcomes for children and reducing reoffending.

**Table 1.1 Locations of the DfE and NOMS funded work**

<b>Prisons</b>	<b>Local Authorities</b>
<b>In the North East</b>	<b>In the North East</b>
Deerbolt	Darlington
Frankland	Durham
	Gateshead
<b>Outside of the North East</b>	Hartlepool
Belmarsh	Middlesbrough
Bristol	Newcastle upon Tyne
Bronzefield	North Tyneside
Cardiff	Northumberland



Eastwood Park  
Maidstone  
Swansea  
Wandsworth

Redcar and Cleveland  
South Tyneside  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Sunderland

**Outside of the North East**

Islington  
Hammersmith and Fulham  
Kensington and Chelsea  
London  
Wandsworth  
Westminster

## 1.1 Methodology for the evaluation

This evaluation is based upon a series of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods. The qualitative methods included: semi structured interviews with prison staff (including Heads of Diversity, Operations, Offender Management, Reducing Reoffending and Regimes, Principal Officers and Prison Officers), probation staff, governors, chaplains and voluntary sector providers in prison (a total of 20 professionals were interviewed); and semi structured interviews with prisoners (a total of 25 prisoners were interviewed across all establishments). Interviews with prisoners were held on a one-to-one basis at legal visits or in prison offices within the prison. Quantitative methods include an analysis of project data.

Themes emerged within individual interviews and across different interviews. Recurring themes across transcripts were taken to reflect shared understandings of the participants and the report is structured according to these recurring themes. This is known as the grounded theory constant comparison method, where each item is compared with the rest of the data to establish and refine analytical categories (Pope *et al*, 2000).

NEPACS Integrated Family Support Programme is a complex and multi stranded initiative comprising of activities in prisons and in the community across the North East. As such it is difficult within the realms of evaluation resources and realistic word limits to produce an all encompassing narrative on all project elements and activities. In this evaluation, we have attempted to capture the major project elements and provide an evidence based commentary on the impact of these.

## 1.2 Background and context

There are several layers to the background and context to the work, from the national policy context, research and the regional working history of NEPACS and other children and family providers.

The national policy context is summed up by the 2013-14 NOMS commissioning plan, which says:

*'supporting and maintaining links between offenders and their families can help reduce reoffending. Doing so can contribute to tackling inter-generational offending by addressing the poor outcomes faced by children of offenders'<sup>1</sup>.*

Research backs up this policy stance and some of this is presented in section 1.2.2. National policy has also been operationalised through the recent commissioning (April, 2013) by the DfE of POPS and Barnardo's to deliver the National Knowledge and Advice Service for Families of Offenders.

### **1.2.1 Regional evidence base**

There is a strong regional context to the work which is based on service delivery and research and deserves a level of recognition. The existence of the current project can be traced back to a piece of research commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation into how the region's prisons supported the maintenance of family ties (Hartworth, 2005). This research provided the foundation for the at-the-time new Children and Families Pathway that was part of the Regional Reducing Reoffending Strategy Group. This was one of seven regional NOMS Reducing Reoffending Pathways (which included Accommodation, Children and Families, Drugs and Alcohol, Employment, Finance Benefit and Debt, Health and Women's Pathway).

The Children and Families Pathway was a very successful strategy group, chaired by Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE), which brought together an enthusiastic group of voluntary sector and statutory agencies. NEPACS was a consistent and strong member of this group. During the lifetime of this group (which ended in 2011), research and reviews were commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation into the effectiveness of the group and its impact at improving provision for the children and families of offenders.

In 2010, a piece of research and policy development was funded by VONNE's Policy and Representation Partnership fund (which was a Big Lottery Fund). This piece of regional research, which was produced by NEPACS and Barefoot Research and Evaluation, resulted in the development of a policy guide to support local authority agencies in efforts to provide services to the children and families of offenders (Hartworth, 2011). It was this piece of work which provided the foundation for the work of the Integrated Family Support Advocates and created an awareness and openness amongst local authority agencies to the idea of the importance of working with the children and

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<sup>1</sup> Page 41, NOMS Commissioning Intentions for 2013-14, October 2012

families of offenders.

These cumulative elements resulted in the current NEPACS Integrated Family Support Programme, which began with the first FSW starting in HMP & YOI Low Newton, closely followed by the DfE and NOMS funded IFSA's and FSWs.

## **1.2.2 National research**

There are now strong arguments for providing family support in prisons based on a growing body of knowledge about the damage that imprisonment does to families. The negative effects accrue to children, family members in the community and those in prison.

That crime tends to run in families is one of the oldest findings in criminology; in other words parental involvement in the criminal justice system contributes to the intergenerational transmission of crime (Murray *et al*, 2012a). In a recent exercise carried out by Durham and Tees Valley Probation, they traced the genealogy of crime in one family that produced 55 people, 47 of whom had been involved in crime. Explanations have focused on the deprived social backgrounds of criminal parents, methods of child-rearing and modeling processes (*ibid*, 2012a).

It is therefore no surprise that many prisoners have experienced dysfunctional family life and have a history of neglect, abuse and absence of love and routines. Many may have grown up in care or have been part of 'troubled families'. These are therefore part of this 'cycle'. There are others however who have grown up in the context of stable families and continue to be part of loving families. Imprisonment of a father or mother in these cases may then start a cycle of crime.

We know that imprisonment of a parent is bad for children. In the Children at Risk Study, recent parental incarceration was associated with high levels of family conflict (Aaron and Dallaire, 2010). If parents have provided affectionate and responsive care for children, a parent's involvement in the Criminal Justice System can be the cause or increase child behavioural problems because of undesirable effects on the social learning environment (Murray *et al*, 2012a). Parental conviction and incarceration can cause stigma or labeling of children, and this could increase the likelihood that they develop their own behaviour problems (*ibid*, 2012a). When parental arrest or incarceration results in increased difficulties for remaining carers, children may be exposed to more problematic parenting practices and spend more time with deviant peers (*ibid*, 2012a).

In an English study of 411 boys, those who experienced parental incarceration in their first 10 years of life, had double the risk for anti-social

behaviour, internalising problems, and other adverse outcomes up to age 48 years, compared with boys without incarcerated parents (Murray *et al*, 2012b, Murray and Farrington, 2008a, 2008b).

Faced with this evidence, it is clear that a level of support is required to help mitigate the negative effects on children. Such mitigation approaches include: increasing the understanding of children about their parents imprisonment; support to parents or carers on parenting; and increasing child/parent contact.

We also know that support provided to prisoners concerning family issues can help resettlement and contribute to a reduction of reoffending. In a longitudinal study, we see that high quality family relationships were a very strong and consistent predictor of successful resettlement outcomes for all family members (Lösel and Pugh, 2012). Also, a Ministry of Justice publication (May *et al*, 2008) concluded that prisoners who received regular family contact were 39 percent less likely to reoffend; another study (Ditchfield, 1994) concluded that if prisoners are released with no family support, they are six times more likely to offend again.

## 1.3 The project

The North East element to the national programme consists of FSWs in two establishments and IFSA's working across 12 local authorities. Although DfE and NOMS did not fund the totality of the work (as some elements were funded by Stockton DAAT, LankellyChase Foundation and Pilgrim's Trust), this evaluation examines the impact of all of the work.

### 1.3.1 Family Support Workers

There are four Family Support Workers located in four prisons in the North East: HMYOI Deerbolt (part time post), HMP Holme House (full time post), HMP & YOI Low Newton (full time) and HMP Kirklevington (part time). The FSWs are based in the prisons where they are located, spending most time working inside the establishments with inmates. With the exception of HMP Kirklevington, the FSWs spend a proportion of time working in the visitor centre. The FSWs at HMP Holme House and HMP & YOI Low Newton carry out some outreach work in the community to see families.

Between June 2011 and October 2012, there was a part time FSW located at HMP Frankland. This FSW left to fill the vacant FSW post at HMP & YOI Low Newton and the post at HMP Frankland was never replaced (as there was only two months left of the contract to run). NEPACS did use the resources to carry out a review of the work there, which is the subject of a separate report (Evans, 2013). However, we do present the outputs associated with this work in section two.

#### Box 1.0 The prisons

HMYOI Deerbolt is a Young Offenders Institution catering for approximately 500 prisoners between the ages of 18 and 21, generally serving sentences up to four years in length and generally drawn from the North and North East.

HMP Holme House is a large Category B Local Prison for male adult prisoners, remand and convicted, with a working capacity of approximately 1000 prisoners. It also holds a small number of young men on remand (18-21).

HMP Kirklevington is a small category C/D semi-open prison generally taking prisoners who intend to settle in the North East. It is a resettlement prison with twelve residential units and a working capacity of 283.

HMP Frankland is part of the national high security estate and holds approximately 850 prisoners. It is a High Security/Dispersal prison holding category A and B adult males serving four years and over, IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) and Life sentences plus high and standard risk category A remand prisoners. There are seven accommodation wings including

accommodation for vulnerable prisoners, also a Disturbed and Severe Psychological Disorders Unit called The Westgate Unit.

HMP & YOI Low Newton is a closed women's prison, holding convicted and unconvicted adult prisoners and young offenders. Low Newton holds women of all ages from 18 years, on remand and sentenced; short sentences to life sentences, and also restricted status (high security) women. It has an operational capacity of approximately 330.

Source: [www.insidetime.org](http://www.insidetime.org)

FSWs are either located within Offender Management or Resettlement Units or with Drug and Alcohol Recovery Teams. Here, they share office space which helps with integration with prison regimes. Referrals into the project come from a range of areas including Prison Officers, applications from prisoners and from direct contact from prisoners when the FSWs are on wings. There are also posters and leaflets on the wings advertising the service.

The caseloads of the FSWs vary from between 20 to 40 although non-active or sleeping numbers can reach 100. The service is in great demand and the FSWs must pay attention to caseload sizes to guard against them becoming unmanageable.

### ***The approach of the Family Support Workers***

The FSWs provide a multitude of tasks covering a wide variety of issues and problems experienced by a range of different people; both prisoners and visitors. There is a complexity to the work which becomes apparent when interviewing beneficiaries. The role played by the FSW on a day to day basis can include:

- Investigator: FSWs will track down family members or professionals (Social Workers, Solicitors) where contact has been lost.
- Researcher: the FSWs will administer questionnaires and consultations with prisoners to identify areas of need.
- Counsellor: FSWs provide emotional support to prisoners who may receive bad news.
- Negotiator/mediator: FSWs will negotiate between the prisoner and the family member to clarify positions and resolve differences.
- Problem solver: if an issue is identified which has a significant bearing on a prisoner's familial situation, the FSW will attempt to solve the problem, such as timing of visits, funding for the costs of visits, the need for chaperoned visits, etc.
- Advocate: the FSW will attend meetings in the community on behalf of the prisoners, such as CAF (Common Assessment Framework) or TAF (Team Around the Family) meetings.

This range of roles reflects the complexity of issues dealt with by the FSWs. The areas of support are presented in section two, although these somewhat mask the detail and intricacies of support. We present the impact of the FSWs in section three.

### **1.3.2 Integrated Family Support Advocates**

The IFSAs consist of 1.5 full time equivalents which cover the North East; one full time position is based in the Tees Valley area covering the south of the region and one half time position is based in Newcastle upon Tyne, covering the north. They both started in July 2011 and so have been working for nearly two years.

The objective of the FSAs is to develop the capacity of community agencies to provide services for the families of offenders. The Advocates also have line management duties for the FSWs. The FSAs are peripatetic, working across several local authority areas. However, they have had bases in the offices of community based services, including in Middlesbrough at Families Forward (a local authority family intervention service) and in Durham (initially at the Integrated Offender Management headquarters in Durham Police Station).

The Advocates have supported local areas in the work that they do with the children and families of offenders; this has mostly been policy work. They also deliver Hidden Sentence training which introduces the workstream to the local areas and reinforces the requirement for policy and operational action.

The Advocates also line manage the Family Support Workers, dealing with administrative issues and issues related to working with a complex and vulnerable client group. The FSWs debrief the Advocates about their work, any problems they have with the prison or their clients and any emotionally challenging aspects of their work. There is a good relationship between Advocates and Workers, which is important considering the need of the Workers sometimes to 'offload'.

The work of the FSAs has been varied and has grown organically, responding to requests, identifying need and points of intervention. This is because provision for families of offenders is non uniform, nor are the responsible agencies. In some areas, responsibility lies with Children's Services, in others it is the Drug and Alcohol Action Teams and in others again it is Integrated Offender Management. However, in general, the activities have been located in the work that is carried out with Troubled Families and Integrated Offender Management units (though not exclusively). There are also differences between local authorities and in some the workstream will be higher on the agenda than in others, so enthusiasm and commitment will be different.

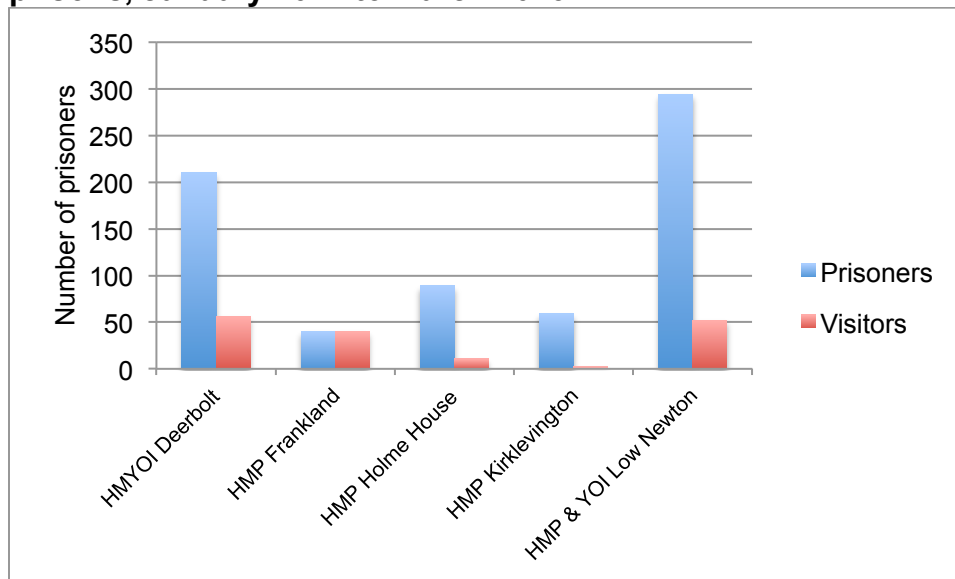
## 2.0 Outputs

There are a number of outputs associated with the project including numbers of prisoners and visitors supported and areas of support. These are presented by establishment. There are other outputs associated with the work which are not presented here, such as number of parenting courses delivered and number of reports submitted to Children and Family Pathway meetings. Some of these outputs are captured in section three. However, it is an apology of an evaluation of a two year, complex and multi stranded project, that we will not document every important aspect and activity, but we must focus on the major elements.

### 2.1 Family Support Work

Between January 2011 and March 2013, the FSWs at all prisons have provided support to a total of 652 prisoners and 161 visitors. See figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 Number of prisoners and visitors receiving support, all prisons, January 2011 to March 2013\***



\*Note: FSWs started delivering support at different times.

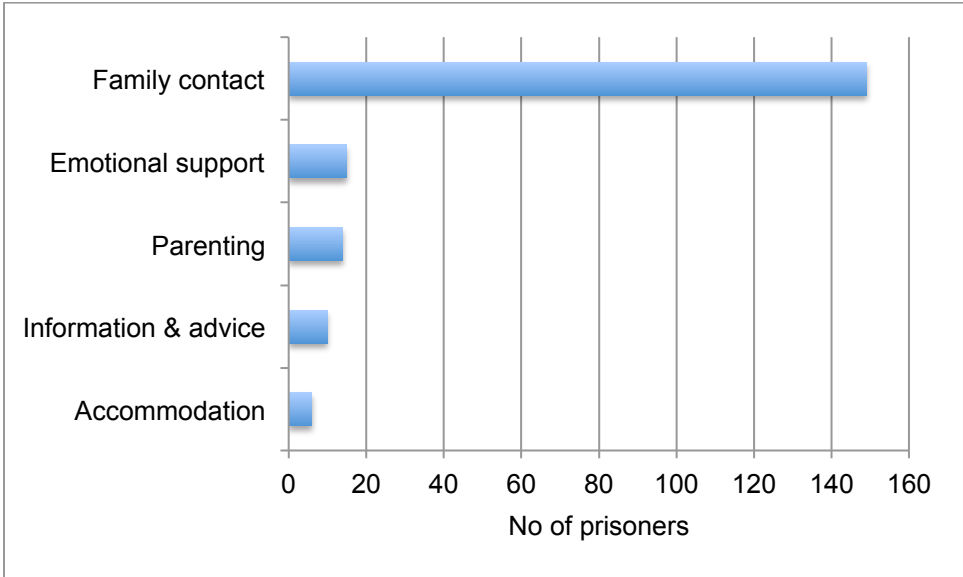
Almost all of these have been White British, with numbers under 10 of other ethnicities (Asian, Black and White European).

#### 2.1.1 HMYOI Deerbolt

Between March 2011 and March 2013, the FSW has provided support to a total of 210 prisoners. The support has mostly been in the area of increasing contact between a prisoner and their children and family (figure 2.2).

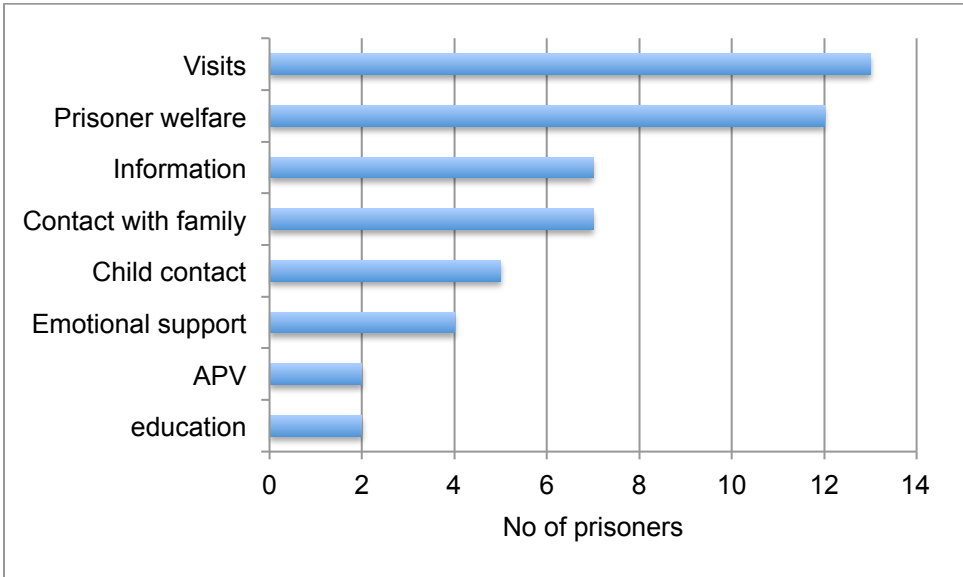


**Figure 2.2 Areas of support to prisoners at HMYOI Deerbolt, March 2011 to March 2013**



Between the same period, the FSW provided support to 56 visitors in the areas presented in the following figure. As can be seen, the most numerous area of support to visitors concerned visiting, for example, assisting visitors with transport arrangements, responding to queries about prisoner transfers or bringing a child to visit. The second most numerous support area was enquiries relating to concerns over the welfare of prisoners, particularly in relation to if the prisoner was being bullied.

**Figure 2.3 Areas of support to visitors to HMYOI Deerbolt, March 2011 to March 2013**



## 2.1.2 HMP Frankland

HMP Frankland was different to other establishments as the FSW supported an equal number of visitors (n=40) as prisoners (n=40).

Figure 2.4 shows the area of support provided to prisoners. Most support was given to prisoners who wanted more contact with their family or to start contact.

**Figure 2.4 Area of support provided to prisoners at HMP Frankland, June 2011 to September 2012**

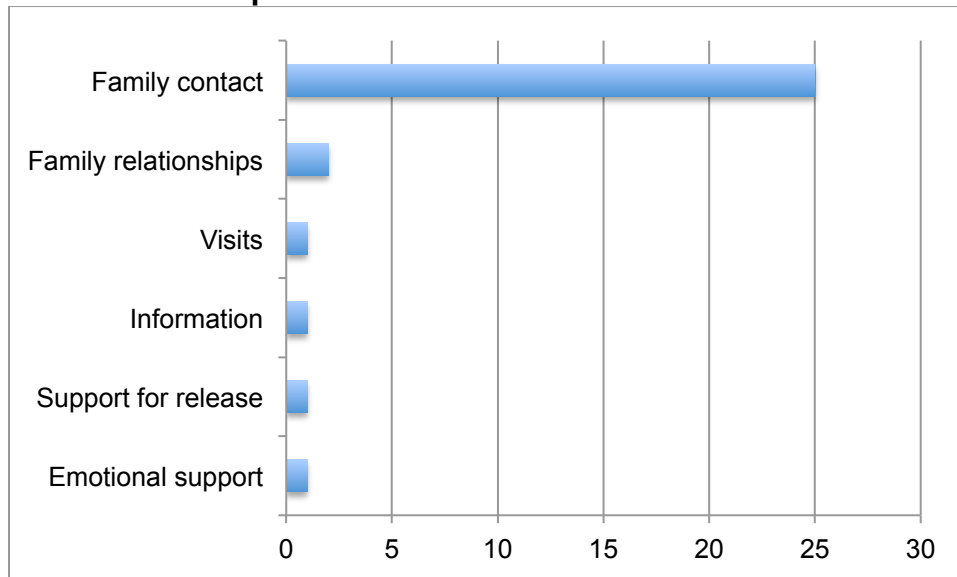
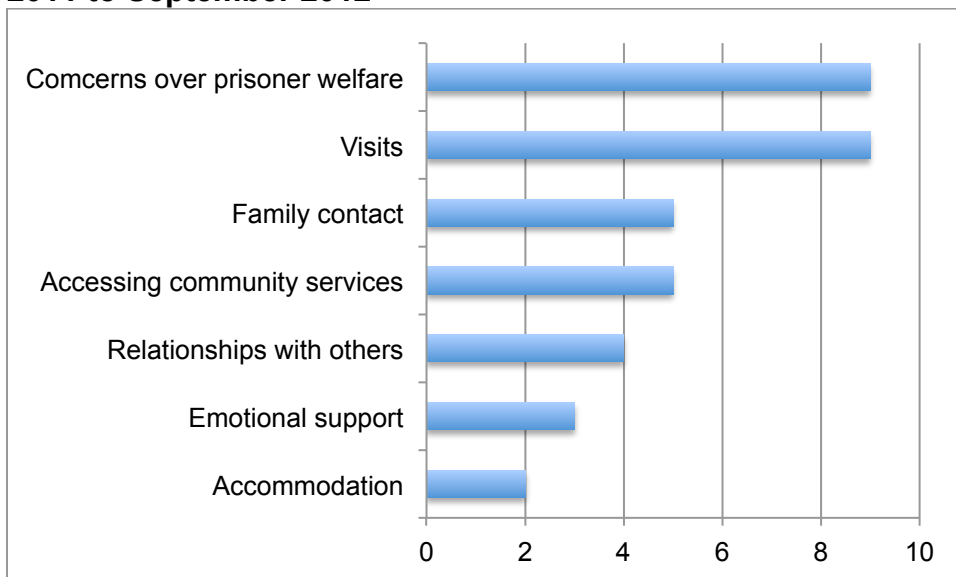


Figure 2.5 shows that the most common area of support provided to visitors dealing with concerns they had over their prisoner welfare. The next most common concern was supporting them over the visits process, for example, difficulties visiting as the prison is so far away from where they live. The next dominant areas of support were: helping with visitors concerns over contact with other family members, for example, clarifying issues whether certain family members are permitted to visit; and helping them to access community support services.

**Figure 2.5 Area of support provided to visitors HMP Frankland, June 2011 to September 2012**



In terms of issues being dealt with prisoners, the best way to illustrate is by presenting the notes of the FSW.

**Table 2.1 Notes from FSW at HMP Frankland concerning areas of support**

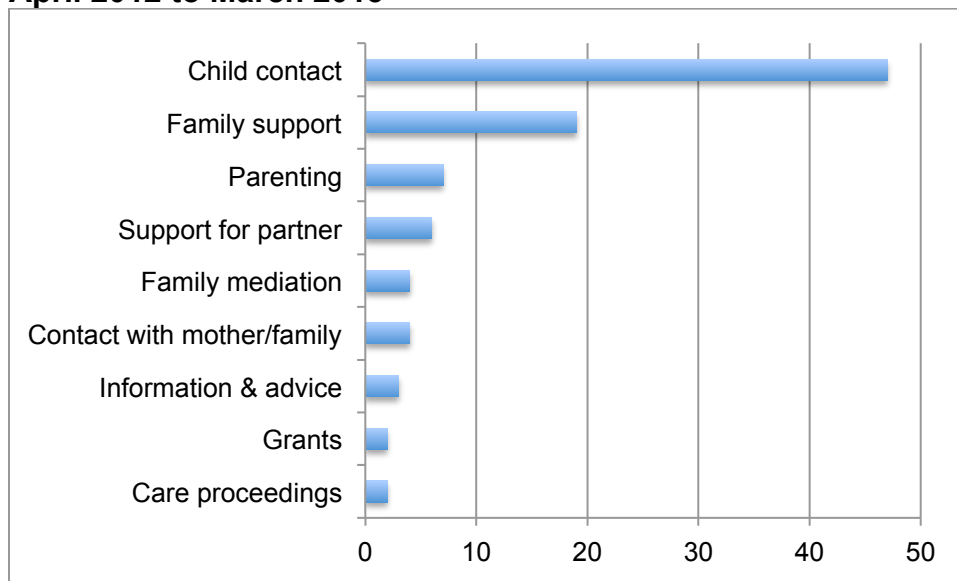
Notes about visitors' issues	Notes about prisoners' issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about son's vulnerability and own health issues</li> <li>• Concerns with young son's behaviour following dad's imprisonment</li> <li>• Concerned about son being befriended by another prisoner</li> <li>• Court hearing for children to have contact with their father</li> <li>• Unsure about telling young son that dad is in prison</li> <li>• Issues with grandson's clearance for visits - social services involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakdown in contact with daughter</li> <li>• Wanting to establish contact with young son</li> <li>• Support with re-establishing contact with mother</li> <li>• Gender reassignment - worried about mother</li> <li>• Preparation for release - support for family</li> <li>• Inter-prison visits with children</li> <li>• Wanted clarification on restrictions</li> </ul>

### 2.1.3 HMP Holme House

Between April 2012 and March 2013, the FSW has provided support to a total of 89 prisoners and 11 visitors. In relation to the support provided to visitors, it has almost entirely been provided to mothers of prisoners who required emotional support and information concerning the welfare of their sons. The types of support provided to prisoners is presented in the following figure.

As can be seen, the most numerous area was supporting prisoners to have contact with their children, followed by general family support. The latter area included helping prisoners access family days, with family contact, visiting arrangements, release arrangements and a range of diverse family issues. It is also noteworthy that the FSW has provided support on identifying community resources for the partners of prisoners who are struggling with child care, on parenting for prisoners and on mediation.

**Figure 2.6 Areas of support provided to prisoners at HMP Holme House, April 2012 to March 2013**



As an illustration, the following table presents the recording notes of the FSW on the types of issues requiring support by the prisoners.

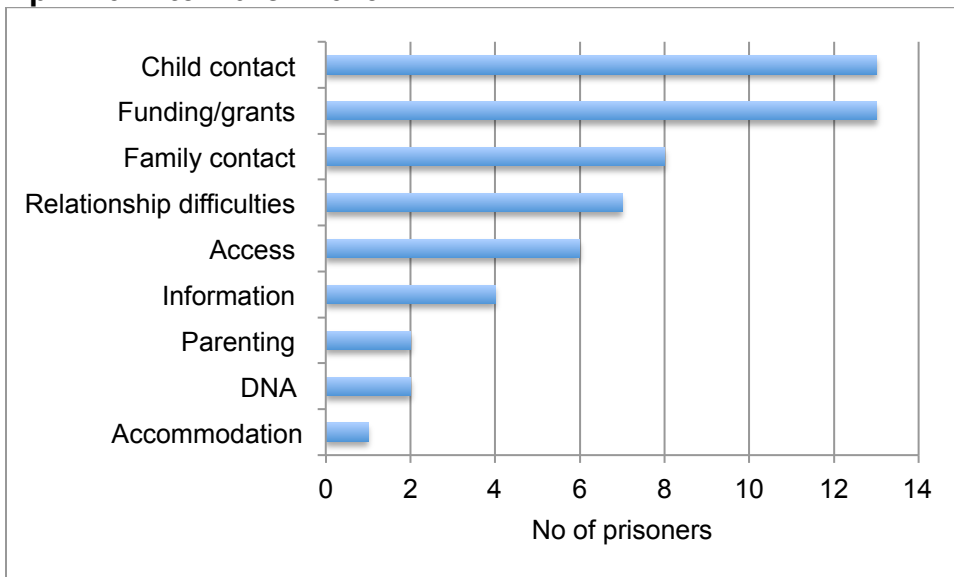
**Table 2.2 Notes from FSW at HMP Holme House concerning areas of support**

- No contact with children for five years, wants to establish relationship
- Wants to re-engage with daughter/support with Children's Services
- Had no contact with children for over one year
- Didn't know whereabouts of children following Social Care involvement
- No contact with son since November 2011
- Liaise with Children's Services to establish contact
- Court proceedings to initiate contact with daughter
- Wants support to re-engage with his children
- Not having visits from son
- Wants support to arrange contact with his daughter
- No contact with daughter since birth
- Support with children's services, child in care of grandparents
- Wants support with Children's Services
- Liaise with Children's Services re updates on son's welfare

## 2.1.4 HMP Kirklevington

At HMP Kirklevington support has been provided almost exclusively to prisoners, with support been given to only two visitors (this is mostly due to the prison not having a visitors centre). The FSW here has supported a total of 59 prisoners and figure 2.7 shows the areas of support that have been given. Again the most numerous area was supporting prisoners around contact with their children. Perhaps unsurprisingly because HMP Kirklevington is an open resettlement prison, the FSW has helped prisoners with visiting family members (arranging grants) or with issues specific to resettlement, i.e. to prepare the family for the return of the prisoner often after a prolonged period of absence.

**Figure 2.7 Areas of support provided to prisoners at HMP Kirklevington, April 2012 to March 2013**



Again table 2.3 shows the type of issues being dealt with by the FSW at HMP Kirklevington.

### **Table 2.3 Notes from FSW at HMP Kirklevington concerning areas of support**

- Social services involvement as mother's new partner has physically assaulted children
- Has doubts to paternity of son, difficulties with access
- Conflict around insecurities and trust with wife
- Prisoner has no family and nowhere to attend home leaves and no funding to support this
- Mother has lung disease and may die before prisoner is released, would like to visit hospital to contribute to her care plan
- Contact broken down since being in custody
- Went to custody when daughter was 2.5 years, previous Social Services involvement
- Daughter is not aware is in custody

### **Box 2.0 Case study one**

The FSW received a referral, Steve\*, from his DART worker a week prior to his release. Steve had been informed by his Probation Officer that he could not return to the family home on his release until Probation were satisfied that he would not be a risk to his children. He had been informed that he would be able stay in the family home during the day but had to sleep at his mother in laws house across the road.

After speaking to Steve and his partner they both agreed that the FSW could make a referral to the Family Support Service in Hartlepool which is part of the Preventions Team. They can provide intensive one to one support to the family to satisfy the concerns of Probation and Children's Services. The FSW completed a home visit with a Family Support Worker from the Family Support Service and a CAF was completed in order that the referral could be made.

The referral was accepted and the Family Support Service began to work with the family. Following this Children's Services have now closed the case and Steve is slowly being integrated back into the family home (allowed to stay an extra night every two weeks if everything is continuing to go well).

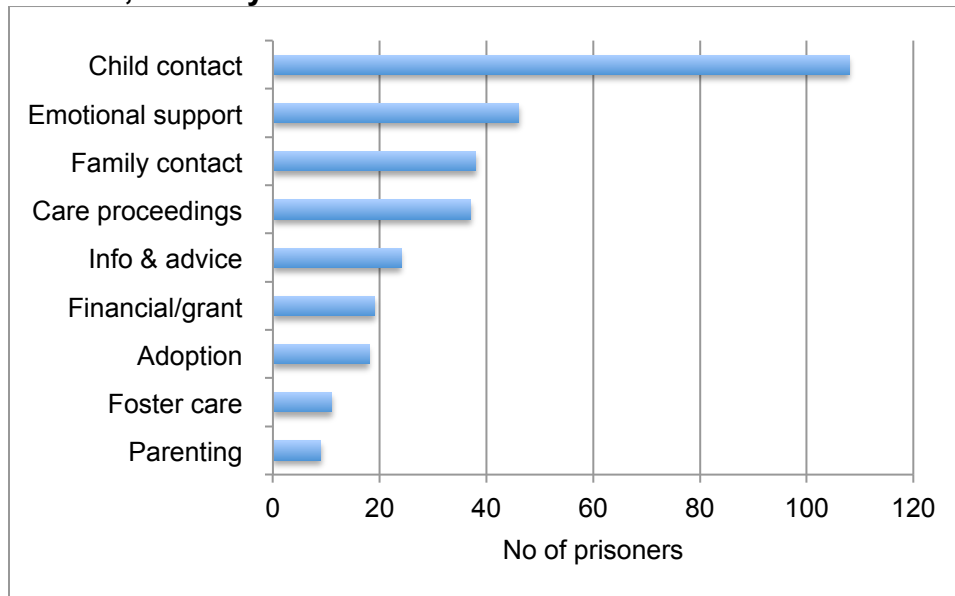
The Family Support Service is still supporting the family on a weekly appointment basis. Steve is attending all his Probation and Triage appointments. He has asked for support around self esteem and confidence building as is keen to start up his own business. The children are thriving and are well stimulated. Both parents want to improve themselves and would like to attend college in the future and move from their current location as there are a lot of drug and alcohol issues in the area.

\*Not real name

## 2.1.5 HMP & YOI Low Newton

The FSW at HMP & YOI Low Newton has provided support to 294 prisoners and 52 visitors between January 2011 and March 2013. The following figure shows the areas of support. Support around increasing contact with children is the highest area of support, followed by the provision of emotional support, then supporting prisoners with contact of other family members (for example, mother or sibling).

**Figure 2.9 Areas of support provided to prisoners at HMP & YOI Low Newton, January 2011 to March 2013<sup>2</sup>**



From March 2012, the FSW started collecting data on the residency of the children of prisoners (see figure 2.10). Between these dates, the 165 women supported had a total of 291 children (and not all women had children). A total of 66 percent (n=192) were looked after by their family (most in kinship care, n=119) and 34 percent (n=99) were looked after, either in foster care or through adoption.

<sup>2</sup> The FSW at HMP & YOI Low Newton predated the other FSWs; the funding came from LankellyChase and the Pilgrim Trust.



**Figure 2.10 Residency of children of mothers in prison, HMP & YOI Low Newton, March 2012 to March 2013**

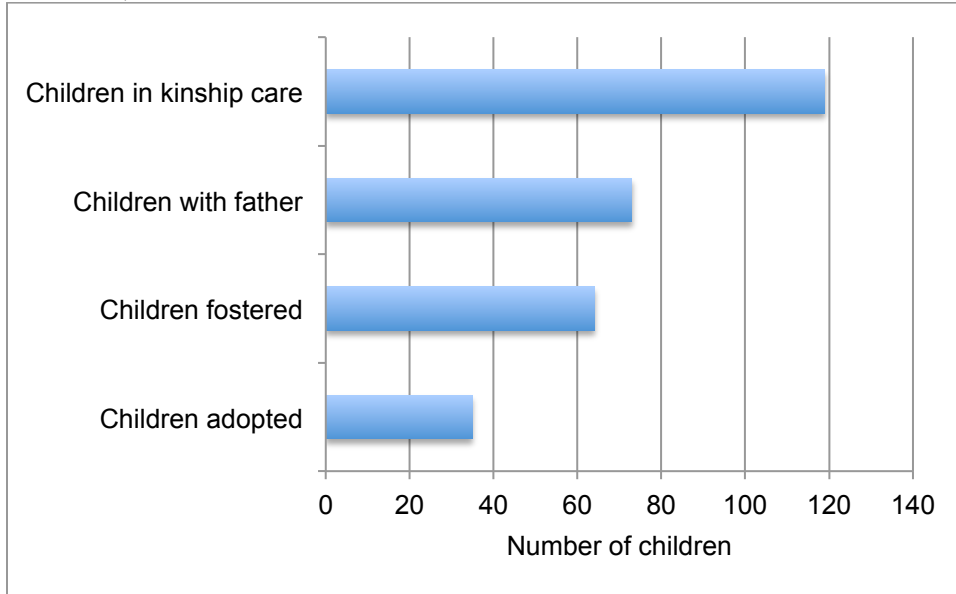
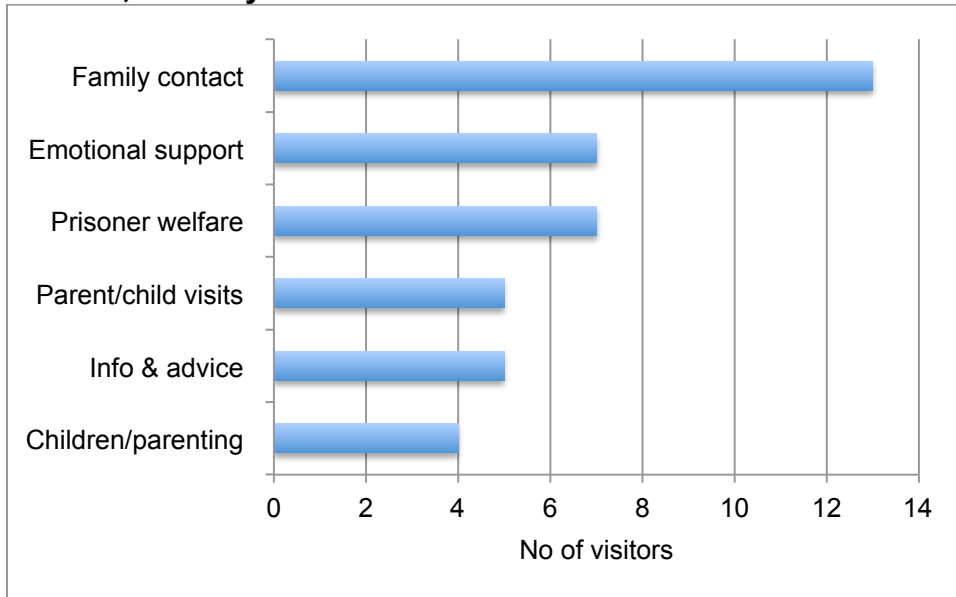


Figure 2.11 shows the areas of support provided to visitors. Support was provided in similar areas to that provided to prisoners, with support around family contact and emotional support being the most common areas of support.

**Figure 2.11 Areas of support provided to visitors at HMP & YOI Low Newton, January 2011 to March 2013**



Similar to the other output sections, table 2.4 shows the type of issues being dealt with by the FSW at HMP & YOI Low Newton.

**Table 2.4 Notes from FSW at HMP & YOI Low Newton concerning areas of support**

- Social Worker wanted to arrange private visit with adoptive parents to meet prisoner
- Coroner wanted to know if prisoner was still in Low Newton
- Contacted by Families First who wanted to arrange a multi-agency meeting before her release
- Contacted by Police to advise that prisoner's partner was found dead in his home yesterday
- Social Worker wanted prisoner to sign agreement for her children to stay in mother's care when she is released
- Wanted to find out if community FSW is still to be involved with the family
- Concerned about the behaviour of her eldest son and would like some support
- Wants me to contact daughter's school to discuss authorised absence for parent/child visits.
- Emotional support for prisoner
- Wanted me to ask her partner if they needed my support with getting children into a new school
- Wants to know what the longer term plans are for her children who are in the care of her parents
- Is pregnant, would like visits now from daughter who is in foster care

## 2.2 Integrated Family Support Advocates

It is more difficult to present the outputs associated with the IFSAs as they provide a more strategic function. Most of their work consists of identifying key professionals within the departments of statutory agencies, providing a lobbying or an encouragement/facilitatory function, and supporting them in developing policies. However, we are able to provide a level of output presentation, which consists of a description of the support they have provided across the local authorities. In addition to this we can present the outputs of the delivery of Hidden Sentence training which has been a key part of their role.

### 2.2.1 Local authority agency support

Table 2.4 presents a description of the work that has been completed in each local authority area.

**Table 2.4 Policy and operational work by local authority area**

Local authority	Policy	Operational
<b>Darlington</b>	IOM team supported in developing use of CAF	Hidden Sentence Use of CAF by IOM team
	Hidden Sentence training (including train the trainers) with integration into children's workforce diploma	Local authority is delivering Hidden Sentence programme and has integrated prisoners family issues into safeguarding and CAF training
	Seat on the Troubled Families board	
<b>Durham</b>	Hidden Sentence training Needs assessment	Hidden Sentence training
	HMP Durham Children & Family pathway rejuvenated	Seconded Prison Officer seconded to Family Support Work role jointly funded by HMP Durham and County Durham Troubled Families Initiative
	HMP Frankland Children & Family pathway rejuvenated	County Durham Library Service providing services for older and disabled prisoners in HMP Frankland
	Advocate continues to facilitate Children &	

	Family pathway at HMP & YOI Low Newton	Hidden Sentence training also delivered at HMP & YOI Low Newton
<b>Gateshead</b>	<p>Hidden Sentence training Setting up policy group</p> <p>Hidden Sentence delivery and consideration of impact of imprisonment during CAF process now embedded by Central Team [Gateshead].</p> <p>Gateshead Troubled Families Initiative made aware of impact of imprisonment</p>	<p>Hidden Sentence training User group</p> <p>Hidden Sentence delivery within schools</p>
<b>Hartlepool</b>	Setting up policy group	<p>Hartlepool's seconded IOM officer works to the Hartlepool protocol has received NEPACS award for the work</p> <p>Hartlepool will contribute to second year of parenting programme at HMP Holme House</p>
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	Working with Children's Services to develop work giving Middlesbrough more of a lead at the HMP Holme House Children & Families pathway	<p>Hidden Sentence training delivered to Children's Centres</p> <p>Working with Primary Schools forum to get Hidden Sentence delivered to senior school staff</p>
<b>Newcastle upon Tyne</b>	Setting up policy group	Hidden Sentence Training

<b>North Tyneside</b>	<p>Hidden Sentence in LSCB training plan</p> <p>Setting up policy group</p> <p>Working with Troubled Families lead to develop a cross border model based on Hartlepool</p>	Hidden Sentence training
<b>Northumberland</b>	Setting up policy group [with focus on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults as well as children]	Hidden Sentence training
<b>Redcar and Cleveland</b>	Co-delivering with M'bro LSCB* on Hidden Sentence	<p>Hidden Sentence training</p> <p>Parenting services engaged with the Children &amp; Families pathway at HMP Holme House and will contribute to parenting delivery</p>
<b>South Tyneside</b>	Probation developed a process for risk assessing family issues amongst client group	
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<p>Gap analysis</p> <p>Hidden Sentence in LSCB plan</p>	Hidden Sentence training with LSCB and to schools
<b>Sunderland</b>	Setting up policy group	Working with LSCB and Social Care to develop two Hidden Sentence sessions for senior managers

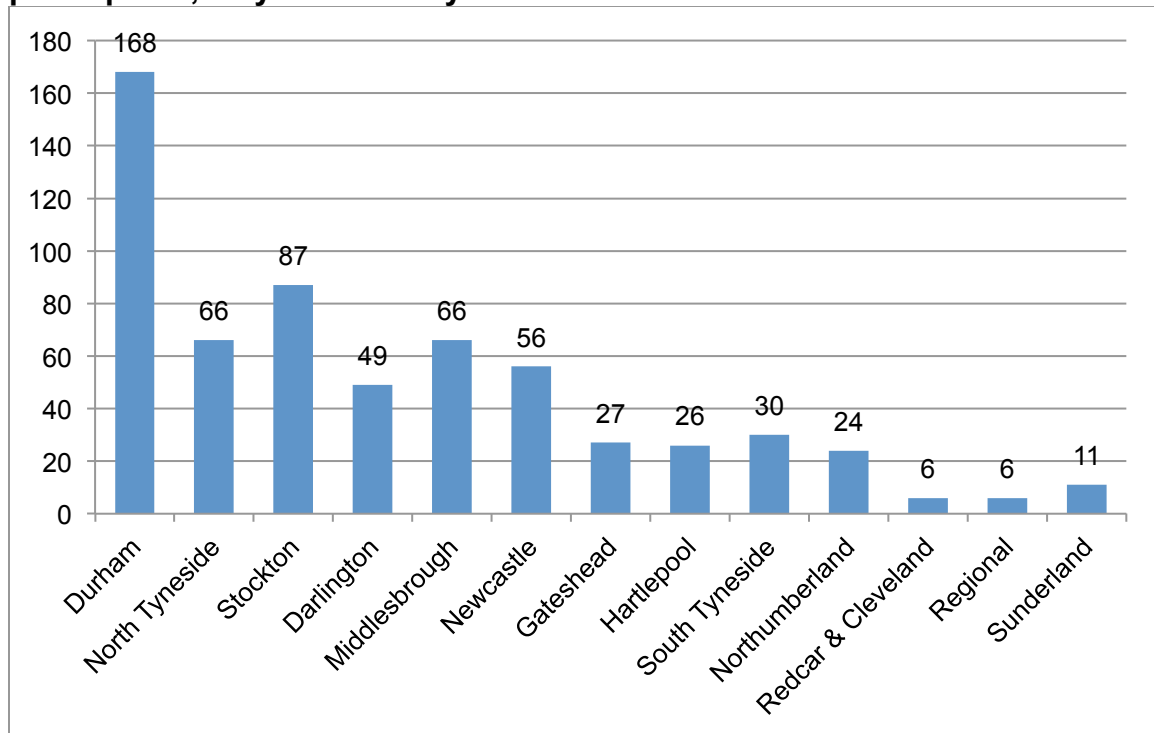
## 2.2.2 Hidden Sentence delivery

Hidden Sentence training is a major part of the Advocates role and has been found to have major impacts across the North East in progressing the work with the families of offenders (this is discussed at length in section three). We present a number of figures which show the spread of the training across local authority area and the type of services accessing the training.

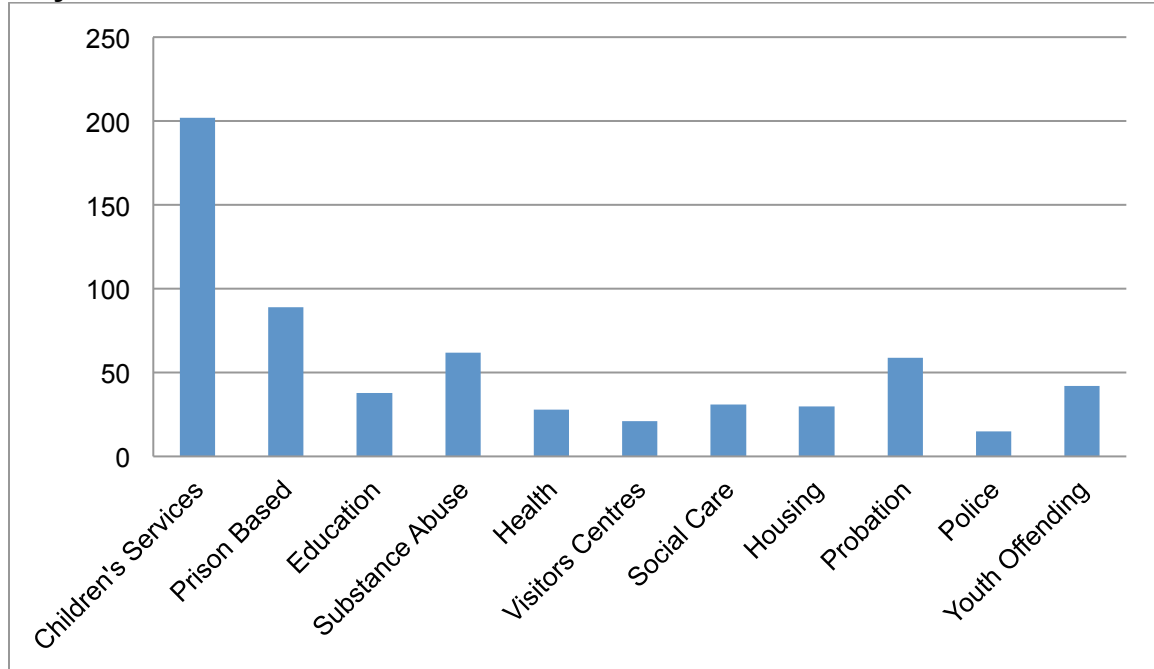
Between September 2011 and June 2013, there has been a total of 37 Hidden Sentence training delivered which have been attended by 622 participants.

As can be seen from figure 2.12 there has been a good spread of training delivered across the areas, with Sunderland, Redcar and Northumberland receiving the least. Figure 2.13 shows that the training has been delivered to high numbers of professionals from Children's Services and Probation. There has also been high numbers from Social Care, Education and substance misuse agencies.

**Figure 2.12 Local authority and numbers of Hidden Sentence training participants, July 2011 to May 2013**



**Figure 2.13 Services accessing Hidden Sentence training, July 2011 to May 2013**



In 2012, NEPACS carried out a survey of participants to look at what impacts the training had had on service delivery. The survey found that:

- A total of 91 percent of respondents had shared the learning amongst their host service.
- Almost two thirds had sought out other information on imprisonment and support available because of the training.
- A total of 38 percent of respondents had made contact with other organisations (for example, Probation making contact with Children's or Family Support Services, or community services contacting prisons).
- Almost 40 percent had made referrals of service users to other services (mostly Children's or Family Support Services) as a result of the training.
- A total of 32 percent of organisations had changed their recording methods.

## 3.0 Findings

This section presents the research findings from the evaluation. The first section (3.1) presents the research findings about the FSWs: it begins with findings from prisoners who were interviewed about the role and impact of the FSWs; this is then followed by the findings from interviews with professionals; then we present 'other findings' which are statements of impact evidenced by project data and other data sources.

Section 3.2 presents the research findings relating to the Integrated Family Support Advocates. This consists of thematic statements of impact from interviews with professionals who have been working with the Advocates.

### 3.1 Family Support Work

#### 3.1.1 Findings from prisoners

The evaluation interviewed a total of 25 prisoners. On the basis of the interviews, the evaluation makes the following findings, based on recurrent themes:

- **The types of prisoner and circumstance vary widely:** it became clear that the types of issues being addressed by the FSW fall into many different categories and the prisoners are very different people. For example, one prisoner needed support to help his elderly mother to visit, another wanted to restart visits from his estranged wife's children, another was wanting help over telling his parents about his sexuality. The FSWs have provided support to women who have received the Final Contact Visit in prison with their child before adoption, they have arranged a chaperone visit for a young prisoner's sister who was in care and who was traced by the FSW and they have arranged for a telephone call in the delivery suite of a hospital from a father in prison at the birth of his first child (this was shown on the *One Born Every Minute* TV show). Thus, there are huge variations in circumstance.
- **The FSWs have increased the frequency and/or quality of special visits:** family days and father child visits are important events in a prisoner's life and represent a unique opportunity to maintain important relationships. In some cases, the FSW has created new family days or father child visits, in other cases there has been an improvement in the frequency and quality of visits. The FSW has worked with prisons, carried out research with prisoners and visitors to identify need, improved activities and resources (e.g. toys and games). This has resulted in increased attendance and frequency of special visits. At HMYOI Deerbolt, the FSW created a programme of parenting courses for prisoners, called



DADS at Deerbolt, which is followed up by parent child visits for participating fathers. Since, December 2011, there have been a total of seven courses, which have been attended by 54 prisoners. As of May 2013, there is a long waiting list.

The results of the increase in special visits has been more and better contact between a parent and their child(ren). One interviewee at HMP Kirkclevington said *“the families now have a longer time with each other, they have more freedom, they can have food ...”*.

One prisoner said *“the family day was mint, they [his children] were all over us ... I’ve got a photograph”*. Another prisoner said about the day *“it just didn’t make my day, it made their [his children’s] day”*.

### Box 3.0 Case study two

In August 2012, Karla\* received a four year drug related prison sentence. She has three children, two of whom (a seven year old girl and a three year old boy) are being looked after by her mother. As a result of her substance misuse, her youngest child had been removed into local authority care and was in the process of being found adoptive parents. Early in her prison sentence, a final contact visit had to be arranged between the child and his mother. Social Services contacted the FSW to let her know. The FSW gave support to Karla, explained what was going to happen and was with her when the final visit took place. The FSW also provided support after the visit had happened.

Clearly, this was a very traumatic event but Karla valued the support of the FSW. She said *“she helped, explained things, was with me, let me know what was happening ... gave me peace of mind”*.

\*Not real name.

- **The FSW has a positive impact on children:** this occurs on a number of different levels, from bringing community services into families to provide support to children to increasing the role of the imprisoned parent in the child(ren)’s life. For example, one female prisoner’s child who was being looked after by her sister was experiencing significant anger issues and the sister was unable to access any support. The FSW liaised with community psychology services and provided expert input into a CAF and support was identified.

Prisoners reported knowing more about their children and being able to be more involved with them. For example, one prisoner said *“[name of FSW] got me Child Protection information, what’s going on in school with him ... got me everything I need to know ... I didn’t have that before”*. This outcome was achieved particularly through the Family Days. For example, one prisoner said *“the Family Days are so brilliant ... it makes you bond with the kids, makes you happy, makes them happy”*.

There was also evidence to indicate that the FSW is having a positive impact on the children's life in the community. Prisoners expressed that their children were experiencing emotional difficulty and stress because of the imprisonment of a parent and this was exacerbated by conflict and separation of their parents. For example, one female prisoner reported "*my youngest was really struggling [with my imprisonment] ... with help [from the FSW] I did pad books for her, got on the parent child visits, upped the contact ... now she's doing much better*". Another female prisoner said "[name of FSW] has meant that the focus is on the children".

### **Box 3.1 Case study three**

The FSW started to work with Craig\* in July 2012 following his transfer from HMP Frankland to HMP Holme House in readiness for his release in January 2013. Craig had served five years of a 10 year sentence. He had done some initial work with the Family Support Worker at HMP Frankland in relation to family support for his sister who has care of Craig's children.

Craig had requested the support to continue for his sister, her partner and the children. The support offered to his sister has included practical financial support, emotional support and support to ensure the children maintained regular contact with their father via visits to the prison.

This is a complex case: Craig's sister has had care of his two children since 2009 when Children's Services became involved due to them suffering neglect and cruelty at the hands of their mother's new partner. The mother gave up care of the children and they would have entered the care system if Craig's sister had not stepped in to support them. She also has five other children. Initially the family lived in a three bedroomed property but moved soon after into a four bedroomed property. The FSW completed a grant application for the family to support them buying additional beds and bedding for the new home.

The FSW has encouraged the family to be involved in Craig's release planning meetings and facilitated them to attend the prison for these. This has allowed them to have input in the process and to give them a better understanding of Craig's release plans. The FSW also facilitated the children to visit on a more frequent basis towards his release to ensure that they rebuilt their relationship with their father.

A referral has been made to Children's Services regarding longer term contact issues with his children and the FSW has had contact with the Social Worker who has been allocated the case to inform them of the work that has been carried out with the family.

\*Not real name

- **The project has led to prisoners reporting they will not offend again:** most prisoners interviewed stated that because of the project, they have thought about their offending behaviour and said that they will not offend again. These reports from prisoners do represent evidence of the start/or a part of a critical process. For example, one prisoner at HMP Holme House

said “*makes you think [about your offending] ... makes you realise that there’s nothing more precious than your kids*”. Another prisoner at HMP Kirkclevington said “*they’re your loved ones and the most important thing in your life ... when you understand this it makes you not want to do it again [reoffend]*”.

This is an area where in the next phase of the evaluation, we will look to source quantitative data on reoffending rates of those prisoners that the project has supported.

- **The FSW plays a resettlement role:** related to the above point is that all prisoners interviewed felt that the work of the FSW made it easier to settle back into life in the community. The FSW brings family members together and improves communication and understanding. An important part of this work is working with the prisoner to help them understand what it is like for the family on the outside. The FSW works with both parties and helps them to understand the impact of the sentence and by doing this supports the resettlement process, which in turn has a positive impact.

One prisoner said “*it’s not as big as a shock for you or your family when you get out*”.

Many of the prisoners interviewed said they would be living with their family when they were released. Some prisoners reported that previous to the involvement of the FSW, they had not intended to live with their family because contact had been lost or relationships were poor. Since the work of the FSW in mending or improving relationships, the family had agreed that the prisoner would live in the family home.

- **The FSWs approach is effective and highly valued:** this is an important element to examine in any evaluation; answering the questions, do service users think the work is of value? do they like the FSW and think the work is good? Indeed, in the NOMS funded Integrated Family Support Project, a Key Performance Indicator is customer satisfaction. In the interviews with prisoners, all reported that the FSW work was of the highest quality. To provide some context, prisoners report that arranging or administering any affairs in prison is difficult and in some cases impossible. Getting help with this process is also difficult. One prisoner illustrates this, “*getting anything done in here is a nightmare, nobody will help you with important stuff ... the Personal Officers don’t help you ... getting a toilet roll off them is hard enough*”. Thus, one immediate impact of the FSW is that they help prisoners “*do things*” and this is highly appreciated. There is therefore an emphasis on pragmatism, for example, one prisoner said “*she’s [FSW] stuck to her word ... she’s done what she said she would*”. Another prisoner said “*It’s a highly complex case. [name of FSW] comes straight away, helps me with letters ... before [name of FSW] came along, the*

*Social Workers never told me anything, now they do”.*

Faced with being able to do little after they had tried in vain to make contact or resolve issues themselves, the FSW's pragmatism was highly valued. Prisoners also said they valued *“knowing someone’s on your side”*. It was clear from the interviews that prisoners valued someone who could do something where they could do very little. Even if what the FSW can achieve is relatively little, it is highly appreciated. For example, one prisoner said *“this time last year I had nothing, I felt like I was banging my head off a brick wall ... now at least I’ve got my foot in the door [with Social Services]”*.

There is also a personal element to the value that prisoners place on the FSW, with beneficiaries valuing the emotional support that is provided. For example, prisoners comments included *“you’ve always got someone to turn to”*; *[name of FSW] always got time for you*; *“she’s spot on, makes you feel comfortable, approachable, I can go and see her when I’m feeling down about my family”*.

In the absence of a large sample survey, we can conclude that the customer satisfaction of the project is very high. One prisoner said *“she [FSW] puts you at ease”*. Another said *“if she stopped [working with me] I’d have nothing”*.

- **Improves prisoner behaviour:** this is a recurring finding in evaluations of family support work in prisons. Prisoners have reported the support provided has a significant impact on their behaviour inside the prison. One prisoner said *“I’d have gone off the rails if it wasn’t for [name of FSW]”*. Another prisoner in a different establishment said *“if I hadn’t got help ... I woulda exploded ... woulda flipped”*.

This was a consistent theme and was raised by almost all prisoners interviewed. In particular, it appeared that the FSW calmed prisoners down at times of crisis. For example, several prisoners reported going to see the FSW when they had received often bad news about their families, often on receipt of letters from Social Services. One prisoner said *“my son said on the phone that my ex-partner’s new boyfriend had hit him ... I went to see the FSW straight away, she calmed me down, said it was a better idea to write to Social Services, instead of killing him, we worked out a plan ... I would have gone off it, if it wasn’t for [name of FSW]”*.

- **The service provided is unique and one that no other current agency could provide:** this point relates to the one concerning the valued approach. It was reported by all those interviewed that a similar service could not be provided by Prison staff. When asked, most prisoners laughed when it was suggested that a Prison Officer could provide the

service. One prisoner said *“an Officer wouldn’t do that, I had depression and [name of FSW] put me in contact with Mind and an Officer wouldn’t do that”*. Another prisoner reported *“I couldn’t get any information from anyone, but [name of FSW] got me what I needed, I asked the Officers, the Chaplain but no one could tell me, but [name of FSW] did”*.

It was raised on a number of occasions (by prisoners and associated professionals) about the necessary skill set of the FSWs. FSWs were reported to have considerable expertise in dealing with family issues and this complex skill set included problem solving, empathetic and independent listening, advocacy and family law. This complex skill set may be one reason why other prison-based agencies report that they would be unable to provide a comparable service. One prisoner said his experience of reporting his situation and need for support to a Prison Officer. The prisoner commented, *“the staff didn’t want to get involved”*. Now, with the intervention of the FSW, this prisoner’s situation has been resolved and his behaviour and well being is much improved.

On a simpler level, the FSW has organised visits that otherwise would have not happened. For example, the visit between an elderly and disabled mother and her son at a family day mentioned in the point about positive impacts on visitors would not have happened if it were not for the FSW. The visitor in this example said *“nothing would have happened otherwise ... if no [name of FSW] then no visit”*.

- **Improves mental health and reduces stress:** clearly, prisoners have much time for reflection about their families and people close to them. Worry and concern prisoners have about these are amplified in prison, particularly as they are unable to either respond to situations or have access to accurate information. Information that does get through to prisoners is often inaccurate and sometimes purposefully inflammatory, which often aggravates already tense individuals. One prisoner said *“I was at the end of my tether”*. The FSWs talk to the prisoners to understand the issue, follow up on requests for information and/or advocacy, provide prisoners with information and attempt to resolve problems, in many cases with great success. Prisoners reported a great improvement in their mood, state of mind and mental health.

Prisoners have reported that the project has resulted in them self harming less. For example, one prisoner said *“If I hadn’t got to see my daughter I was ready to slice up in my pad”*. Another said *“the closer I get [to my family] the better I feel”*. Prisoners have also reported needing less medication as a result of the FSW’s intervention. One prisoner said *“before I was depressed, run down ... I needed sleeping pills”*.

One prisoner summed up the sentiments of others by saying *“in here*

*you're trapped, you're a concerned father and there's nothing you can do in here ... but I'm not trapped anymore, [name of FSW] has helped me do things, I feel so much better".*

In the female estate, the impact on prisoner mental health has been clearly expressed by those interviewed. For example, one prisoner reported "*I'd hit rock bottom ... really hard*". Indeed, at HMP & YOI Low Newton, there was a strong sense of before and after reported by prisoners, for example prisoners have reported feeling "*very low and emotional*", "*really depressed*" and "*suicidal*" before receiving support and "*I feel much better now, I know what's going on and [name of FSW] has give me loads of support*" and "*I've got peace of mind now*" after support.

- **The project has positive impacts on the visitors:** it was reported by prisoners and visitors that the work of the FSW has considerable positive impacts on visitors. This was the result of a number of activities, for example, through arranging for special visits to take place, broaching contact where contact has been lost or supporting applications for prisoner transfers.

*One prisoner said "my mam's 76 and in a wheelchair. She used to worry where I was ... it was making her ill. It's hard for her to travel from Preston just for an hour and a half visit so she's never visited before [Name of FSW] arranged for a family day visit and she saw where I was ... put her mind at rest ... doesn't get ill now with the worry ... she's been reassured and I'm happier in that knowledge".*

- **Brings families together:** there is evidence to demonstrate that the project reconnects families and brings disparate family members back together. This is achieved in a number of ways: by tracking down 'lost' family members; through mediating between prisoner and family member(s); and through sorting out practicalities, such as Assisted Prison Visits. Without the intervention of the FSW, these contacts would not be made.

It is difficult for prisoners to organise visits and contact from inside prison. For example, if an estranged partner does not wish to bring their children to visit their parent in prison, then there is not much the prisoner can do about it.

One prisoner supported had experience of this situation "*I wasn't seeing my children, I hadn't seen them for six months, I tried to contact my ex, tried to contact Social Services with a letter, but got nothing ... [the FSW] came and listened, she contacted Social Services, now I'm allowed to see my family ... if it wasn't for [name of FSW] I'd have gone off the rails*". In other cases the FSW brokers contact between couples where contact has

been lost and visits from children do not take place. For example, one female prisoner said “*he [father of the children in the community] wouldn’t talk to me, listen to me, we’d just shout, he was so confrontational, but [name of FSW] acted as a go between and explained things to him ... now he’s bringing her [her child] up on a visit*”.

Another prisoner explained how the FSW had traced their siblings and had arranged a subsequent visit. They said “*I’d lost contact with my older brother, [name of FSW] traced them and helped me find my other brother and sister too, then they visited ... I hadn’t seen my sister since I landed here [in prison seven months ago]*”.

Another example is one prisoner who had looked after his daughter before his sentence every weekend, and after the first few visits, he had not seen his daughter for two years. His letter and phone calls went unanswered and he was unable to contact either mother or daughter. The FSW contacted his solicitor and then contact was made with the mother of his child. Now, he receives visits every two weeks.

A number of prisoners interviewed reported receiving visits where in the past they had received none. For example, one prisoner said “*I’m getting visits now every week, I’m learning more about them [family] and the bond’s getting stronger*”.

This experience is relatively common. The prisoners reported that the intervention from the FSW solved the problems that they could not. This has major impacts on their mood, mental health and behaviour, as illustrated by the previous points.

The FSWs also have supported families to make the decision to split up and assisted them through this, either through arranging contact or helping explain reasons. This is important as it illustrates that sometimes it is in the best interest of individuals within a family to separate.

- **The relationship that the FSW has with a prisoner is unique:** and one that no other professionals in the prison have. FSWs are reported by other professionals working in the prison to have a close relationship with those they work with. This relationship is based on pragmatism, i.e. the FSW working to resolve issues, and resolution. The FSW is considered to be trustworthy and independent. One prison Chaplain said “*prisoners are more honest [with the FSW]*”. Both prisoners and professionals said that prisoners told the FSW things that they would not tell others. In some situations this has given evidence to Safer Custody or PPU Departments in prison, to address an incident of bullying for example. The FSW is always clear with the prisoner that any information they disclose about risk, to themselves, others or security, they are obliged to tell the prison

authorities. In most cases, the prisoners want the FSW to do this on their behalf.

It was reported by prisoners that they have very limited trust of the Prison Officers and think that they tell other Officers what has been said. This is one reason that most prisoners and professionals think that the work of the FSW could not be carried out by a Prison or Probation Officer. There were other reasons, including prisoners are unlikely to talk about sometimes intimate family issues with an individual who locks them up.

One prisoner said *"I don't talk to the Prison Officers ... I don't trust them ... but I can talk to [name of FSW], I respect her, trust her"*. Another female prisoner said *"the Prison Officers would never do it [the work that the FSW provides]"*.

- **Improving safeguarding of children:** there is evidence to indicate that because of the FSW, more children are kept safer and at a reduced risk of harm.

For example, one prisoner had concerns over the welfare of his children whilst they were being looked after by their mother, his ex-partner. He became aware from friends, family members and his children, that his ex-partner was increasingly using substances, leaving the children at-risk. The prisoner tried to raise these concern with Social Services but was unsuccessful; they were reported not to take action over his concerns and were thought by the prisoner *"didn't take me seriously"*. The FSW pursued the matter on the prisoner's behalf, contacted Social Services and a meeting was arranged. The result of this, was a meeting being called between the prisoner and Social Services, where the monitoring of the family situation and care arrangements for his children was discussed.

The prisoner stated *"Social Services are taking me more seriously, the kids are safer now"*. They continued *"without [name of FSW]'s help, the kids would have come to harm"*.

- **Prisoners are telling other prisoners about the service:** there were reports from prisoner service users about them telling their fellow prisoners about the value of the service. This has taken some time, as prisoners need to have some experience of receiving support before they can tell others about it. However, from the prisoners who were interviewed, there were general feelings that most prisoners require this type of support. For example, one prisoner said *"everyone has got family, it's the biggest thing in here ... that's what you think about all the time, the people outside, your family ... it can do your head in"*.



### 3.1.2 Findings from professionals

- **The FSW has led to improvements in the prison regimes:** this is particularly evident with family days, which varies between establishment depending on existing provision. In those establishments where there was no provision, the FSW has started Family Days and in prisons that already had Family Days, the FSW's input has increased the quality of provision and increased the number of Family Days held.

For example, in HMP Kirklevington, before the FSW started the family day was attended by only three families. After a prisoner and visitor survey was carried out by the FSW and improvements were made such as involving NEPACS Play Workers and a barbeque, the family days now run on two consecutive days and are well attended; the most recent two days being attended by eight families on each day. The Chaplain in one prison said "*before [name of FSW] there were no Family Days ... now we're on to our second lot*".

In terms of improvements, it was noted that because of the input of the FSW, prisoners now have a longer time to spend with their families, they have more freedom with their family members (they can be more physical and interactive with their children for example) and they can enjoy more activities, including football and receiving photographs to keep (taken by staff).

At HMP Holme House, the DART Team Manager reported that the work of the FSW had made the family days that are run on the Therapeutic Community Wings "*much easier and better*".

- **There has been an increase in the identification prisoners with family issues:** more prisoners who have a family problem are being picked up because of the FSW. This is due to DART workers and prison staff asking the question to prisoners because they have a resource in prison who can address problems should they become apparent. Whilst it is unknown if these problems have led to offending, it is fair to say that addressing the problems has a favourable impact on resettlement. For example, there is evidence that the FSWs have repaired broken relationships to such an extent that prisoners can return from prison to the family home.
- **Better relationships can be built with prisoners:** a recurrent theme amongst professionals was the ability of the FSW to spend time with the prisoner, developing a relationship with them and a real understanding of their (family) issues. This was considered key to their approach and effectiveness. It was also highlighted on many occasions that this was generally something that other professionals in prison could not do, as a result of high prisoner volumes and often dual roles. For example, a Prison

Officer can play the role of a Personal Officer and a Family Liaison Officer. This coupled with the often complex and time consuming nature of family related problems means that Prison Officers cannot respond to requests from a prisoner. Added to this, if the requests require contact with solicitors or Social Services then this adds another layer of complexity which can further discourage action on behalf of the Prison Officer. Even if an issue requires contact or negotiation with the prisoner's family members, then this may be off putting to others without the experience or time.

- **The work of the FSW saves the time of other professionals working in the prison:** this enables them to concentrate on core service objectives, for example, reducing risk of high risk offenders for the Probation Service or keeping prisoners in a secure custodial estate for the Prison Service.

One professional working within the prison said *"if [name of FSW] wasn't here, then it takes two days plus of my time"*. Another said *"We're rushed off our feet ... it would be very hard for us to do anything of benefit about families"*.

Some professionals have commented that they are reluctant to offer support concerning prisoners' families. This may either be because they lack the required skill set or feel uncomfortable broaching the subject.

- **The FSW adds value to the work of others services within the prison:** when working with a prisoner, for example, an Offender Supervisor or DART worker, family issues often arise as an issue that the prisoner would like help with. However, often other priorities take precedence, such as drugs or accommodation and family issues would have been ignored. Now, an immediate referral can be made to the FSW and these issues will be dealt with. This gives credibility to the position of the worker, that they have the ability to address the prisoners' problems, either through their own actions or the actions of others. It also means that family issues are likely to be resolved because, as a result of the FSW, workers in the prison will ask prisoners about family. For example, a DART worker said *"now it is in the back of your mind [family issues] which means you ask about it ... before when we didn't have [name of FSW] we wouldn't ask"*.
- **The FSW brings together prison departments:** this has been achieved through work undertaken by the FSW. For example, work carried out in HMP Kirkclevington brought Education working together with the Chaplaincy and the uniformed Officer when family days are organised. In an often segmented establishment, departments always risk becoming isolated. Thus bringing them to work together as a partnership only has positive results.
- **The role of the FSW was considered to be highly important in the**

**prison:** all those interviewed agreed that the position was important for a number of reasons. These included: the prominence of family issues in prisoners' lives (as a Prison Chaplain said "*everyone has a family*"); the FSW providing the link between the prison and the community (for resettlement purposes); providing an important social welfare role, improving health and well being and reducing distress.

It was also felt that the role has wider impacts, improving society at large. For example, a DART manager said "*the work has strong intentions ... it has good outcome for society*".

It was also recognised that the FSW was a difficult position, predominantly because they were hearing many complex and sometimes distressing situations and dealing with very strong emotions on a day to day basis. As one professional illustrated "*it's a tricky job*". As a result of this it was thought important to have good and thorough line management.

- **The FSW represents an important resettlement resource:** professionals reported that having a FSW in the prison means that the family is now used as a resettlement resource, whereas in the past this would be limited. For example one DART worker said "*it increases the motivations [of the prisoner] to work towards release ... it's a really powerful resource*".

### 3.1.3 Other findings

- **There is greater demand than there is capacity:** this is not unusual within service delivery in prisons or with groups with complex needs. However, it is an important finding to iterate which demonstrates need.
- **The nature of provision varies depending on the type of establishment:** evidence indicated that there were differences in the type of provision. The following sub sections present examples of these differences.

**HMP Frankland, High Security Estate:** there have been complexities to the work here which have been related to the offences of the prisoners. For example, much of the work of the FSW has consisted of using investigative approaches to determine if prisoners were permitted to have contact with their children. As a result of the nature of the offences, the FSW spent considerable time liaising with the prison's Public Protection Unit (PPU) and communicating with solicitors to find out if there were reasons why there could be no contact. In many cases because of the crimes committed, either due to their violent or sexual nature, prisoners could not have contact with children. This had implications to the work and as a consequence, as was reported by the FSW, "*the work was less to do*".

*with children*". As an illustration, the FSW reported "*contacting two or three solicitors, liaising with the PPU and in the end it's a no. However, you can feed that back to prisoners and explain why they can't have contact*". Thus, similar to the work in the female estate, much of the work was providing information, explanations and sometimes giving 'peace of mind' to prisoners.

Other work specific to the high security estate has been the high level of work carried out with visitors, who have had support needs of their own. There has also been support work carried out preparing children and families for contact, via letter or telephone, where contact has been legally permitted between a prisoner and their children. There have been many concerns from visitors to HMP Frankland about the welfare of the prisoners they visit, but this is no different to the work in other estates.

There has been a recent needs assessment carried out at HMP Frankland by the Integrated Family Support Advocate, in response to the premature end of the FSW (who moved to take up the vacant FSW post at HMP Low Newton) and the opportunity to review the requirement for the work. This included a survey of prisoners and interviews with prison staff. The assessment identified a family support need for provision for the needs of older prisoners, of which there is a growing population in the prison (older prisoners made up 25 percent of the FSW's caseload).

The work in the high security estate has also differed to that of other establishments because the FSW has been escorted by a Prison Officer at all times. This clearly influences the nature of the relationship between worker and prisoner.

**HMP & YOI Low Newton, Female Estate:** this prison has seen the biggest need in terms of referrals and applications (the individual caseload at its highest point was over 50). Indeed, the work here has reviewed its referral criteria to avoid the FSW being swamped by prisoners (for example: the FSW has stopped going to inductions for new prisoners as the response from prisoners was too great; they stopped doing post-adoption work as it proved too time consuming dealing with each case). There is a waiting list for support.

Here there has been more work done with families; supporting families in the community through outreach and linking them with work done with prisoners. There has also been more reconciliation work carried out here, bringing children and mother back together after Child Protection processes. This has not happened in other establishments, perhaps unsurprisingly as mothers tend to provide the role of primary carer.

The FSW has identified that a crucial part of family support is upon

release. This is reported to be a critical time in family reconciliation as the mother is at a particularly vulnerable time, for example in terms of accommodation (risk of being homeless or staying in unsuitable, i.e. hostel, accommodation) and substance misuse. If a mother is not supported during this time to continue the work that started in the prison, then efforts to demonstrate to Child Protection agencies that the mother is able to parent, may come to nothing.

**HMYOI Deerbolt, Young Offenders Institution:** here the project supports a high number of young fathers, who often are first time dads. Through the DADS at Deerbolt course, the FSW and a local Sure Start has provided instruction to those new fathers about baby care techniques, child behaviour and the importance of play. The new dads have been able to put the theory into practice on the father/child visits, where they are able to spend time with their new baby on their own. Also at HMYOI Deerbolt, the FSW has helped prisoners, who may have grown up in care, contact siblings from whom they have become separated. There has also been work done in brokering contact between parents and prisoners where relationships have broken down. All of these aspects have resulted in a calmer, better behaved group of young offenders who are strongly affected by problematic family issues. In other words, young offenders are often likely to have fallen out or lost contact with their immediate family because of their offending. Creating and strengthening the bonds between young prisoners and their young children is a good way to encourage prisoners not to reoffend in the future, as one prisoner said *"I've gotta get my life back on track because of my kid"*.

**HMP Holme House, Local Category C:** the work here is strongly influenced by the high volume and high turnover of prisoners. The nature of the FSW role varies greatly and can include, locating and contacting family members on behalf of the prisoner to let them know about the imprisonment, negotiating between a prisoner and their estranged partner to enable visits from the child(ren) and preparing both the prisoner and the family for release. Unsurprisingly because of the high numbers of prisoners, there is great demand for the FSW. However, the FSW has to be careful to not get diverted away from the family remit of the work, because of a needy prison population (in other words, prisoners will often approach the worker for assistance with information, accommodation and finance issues).

**HMP Kirklevington, Open Prison:** again because of the nature of the prison, much of the work here relates to involving prisoners' families in the process of resettlement. Whether this is through facilitating families to visit on family days or assisting prisoners with grant applications for issues related to ROTL (Release On Temporary License). However, a large proportion of the work here is also routine family support work, in other

words facilitating child/prisoner contact where appropriate and resolving relationship problems which stops visiting happening.

- **Integration into prison regimes has varied:** the FSWs have become embedded within the prisons where they work to different degrees. Generally, they have been welcomed and in certain prisons they have become quickly involved in prison processes. In others, this has been less evident. For example in certain establishments there was no prison induction or CNOMIS (the prison database) training after six months in post. There has been a variance in how the project is integrated into the prisoner induction process and making prisoners aware of the support available. Attendance at meetings such as Resettlement, Safer Custody or Drug Strategy meetings is sporadic. This attendance varies between establishment, with some being well integrated and others being occasional.

In certain establishments there has existed an institutionally held view that prisoners do not deserve to have support around family issues and this has resulted in some hostility to the work. However, in such establishments, through the practice of the work and where Hidden Sentence has been provided, there has been softening of such views. Thus demonstrating that the project is having an impact in changing a prison culture.

In other prisons, for example at HMP & YOI Low Newton, the FSW has been well integrated with the prison regime and has felt that their role is highly appreciated and recognised as important.

- **The project improves outcomes for children:** this was one of the key tenets of the project, along with a reduction of reoffending and it is demonstrated by the FSWs completing Common Assessment Frameworks (CAFs) for children of prisoners. CAFs are the recognised action focused standard for improving outcomes for children.
- **The FSWs require good support and management:** the FSWs require congratulating in carrying out complex and demanding work, often of a highly emotional nature, in a challenging prison environment. Added to this, they are not part of the formal prison regime so lack the structured support received by Prison Officers and other internal prison staff. In most cases they have been 'thrown in at the deep end'. The considerable results they have achieved within the time available are a testimony to their professionalism and strength of character.
- **The expertise of the FSWs is increasing and they represent a valuable resource:** the FSWs have developed valuable hands on experience in a multitude of different family situations as well as other

training. For example, one FSW is now CRAFT trained and one is pending; CRAFT is an evidence based family support intervention for carers of people with substance misuse issues. This puts them in a important position to deliver further support to prisoners and their families, particularly those with substance misuse issues.

## 3.2 Integrated Family Support Advocates

This section presents the findings from interviews with a range of professionals who have been involved with the Integrated Family Support Advocates. This includes community-based family support services, prison-based services and recipients of Hidden Sentence.

The Family Support Advocates have had broad and far reaching impacts across the North East. They have achieved what they set out to achieve, which was developing and progressing a largely new workstream and supporting local authority areas, prisons and probation to develop capacity and coordination in order to support children and families of offenders. The activities of the Advocates have been many and varied and it has been a unique skill set that they have developed over the last two years.

The Advocates have had to identify openings and appropriate individuals and services, contact these and convince them without a statutory mandate (there has been no Government guidance that says local authorities should focus on the children and families of offenders) of the importance of developing work, advise them on how to do this and possess the courage and audacity to take the lead and coordinate multi agency and disciplinary efforts. They have also had line management duties for the FSWs working in prison (which were also new posts in a traditionally difficult environment for 'outsiders'). They have become and are now highly skilled Advocates and are essential at developing the work to improve outcomes for the children and families of offenders.

In the following section, we present our findings of the impact of the Advocates.

- **Hidden Sentence has been highly appreciated and valued by participants:** it was reported by interviewees who had attended training that the training was well delivered, was interesting and was valued. The training had attracted large numbers within local authority areas and in some there were waiting lists for future training. This was attributed to the high interest generated by the subject area, i.e. people were interested in what happened in prisons and the effects of imprisonment on a family. During the interviews with Hidden Sentence attendees, we were struck by the high level of impact that the training had had. Comments from local authority professionals included “*everybody needs this training*”, “*it totally opened my eyes to the impact imprisonment has on a family*”, “*it’s changed the way I look at it [imprisonment]*”, “*It just goes to show, it could be you*”.

There continues to be an appetite for Hidden Sentence training in areas which both have received the trainers input and areas that have not. In other words, where areas have the capacity to deliver on their own,



local agencies want more training and the same applies in areas which have no capacity to deliver. Professionals had told other professionals about the training and about how good it was. There were reports of professionals contacting the Workforce Development Teams to ask when the next Hidden Sentence would be run. The local need is particularly felt for schools, for example, one interviewee said “*we particularly need to get the teachers on the training*”. This has implications for the continuation of the project.

- **Hidden Sentence training has been adapted to suit local situations and needs:** there were reports from agencies who had received Train the Trainer input that they had added to and changed the training schedules in the light of their own needs. For example, one local authority area agency had included CAF elements to the training and had also introduced a prison family scenario (from the Homeward Bound Action For Prisoners Families DVD) to their own CAF training. For example, one interviewee said “*we’ve tweaked the training more to be more CAF focused as this is what we want our response to be ... when someone comes across a prisoner’s family who need help we want the response to be the CAF or a TAF [Team Around the Family]*”. This was another objective of the advocate work; to have local authority agencies take the resources offered and provided by the project and use and adapt them to suit local needs.
- **Agencies are investing to continue Hidden Sentence training in their local authority areas:** this is demonstrated not only in their human resource investment in putting forward trainers to be trained in delivery, but also through financial investment to continue the training. For example, one local authority has invested in further Hidden Sentence training as part of their LSCB annual training programme. Two local authorities have embedded the Hidden Sentence training in their Workforce Development Programmes and deliver the training with their own trainers.
- **Introduced and increased awareness and started an area of work for local authorities:** this was a major objective of the IFSA element of the project and there is evidence to indicate it has been achieved across a number of local authority areas and their agencies. There were reports from community-based services that as a result of their contact with the project, there have been more local authority agencies who recognise the importance of the workstream. In other words, more agencies have been aware of the needs of families affected by imprisonment. Such services include Family Intervention Teams and others working with Troubled Families, school staff and Sure Start workers. This has been because of both the Hidden Sentence training and the coordination work carried out by the project. One interviewee said “*it has raised a new discussion that wasn’t a priority*” and there is evidence that this has had far reaching impacts, as one interviewee reported “*it [Hidden Sentence] has filtered*

*down through hundreds of staff, not just in the statutory sector but in the private sector [childcare] providers too”.*

One community-based family service said “*we know more now as a service [because of NEPACS) ... we know about what goes on in prisons, what is and what is not available inside, about visiting ... we didn’t know that we could go in and work with a prisoner three times without needing to get security clearance, which is good because now agencies know that option is available to them”.*

Another interviewee explained that previous to contact with the project, when professionals were working with a family they would not have considered if imprisonment of a family member was a factor that had any influence. For example, one interviewee said “*previously we wouldn’t have asked the question ... now we will”.*

As was planned for in the initial project design, the work has stimulated statutory agencies to begin work streams of their own. For example, one local authority area started peer support groups and is planning the creation of a prison information leaflet for families, modeled on a Scottish leaflet.

Indeed, the project has resulted in work with prisoners families becoming embedded within statutory work plans and this has occurred on different levels and to different degrees across the North East local authorities. It includes: Hidden Sentence training has become part of LSCB policies and action plans in some authorities; Hidden Sentence training is now part of HMP Northumberland’s Children and Families Action Plan; and Children’s Centres working closely with Integrated Offender Management teams.

- **Developed the workstream, built capacity and ensured momentum:** the Advocates have, as planned, progressed the work that is aimed at supporting the children and families of offenders in the community. This is evident in a number areas, for example:

A Family Support Worker from Bishop Auckland One Point<sup>3</sup> service goes to the IOM meeting once a fortnight to pick up any families in need of support, links under fives in with Children Centre services and uses the pre CAF as a referral tool - all things that were recommendations made by the Advocate to the Reducing Reoffending Group and Think Family Board in Durham 18 months ago.

At HMP Holme House, there was no Children and Families Pathway in existence until the appointment of the NEPACS FSW. Now the advocate has

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<sup>3</sup> There are 10 One Point centres across County Durham. They bring together a number of agencies who work with children, young people and families.

been asked by the prison to chair the Pathway and lead its development. At this Pathway, a prison Parenting Strategy will be redeveloped and implemented.

At North Tyneside local authority, Children's Services and the Probation Service within the IOM team had developed a Children and Families of Offenders Policy. The Advocate began the operationalization of that policy by starting a programme of Hidden Sentence training. The individuals who participated in the Train the Trainers course are now leading their own Hidden Sentence training programme. This is now changing the practice of frontline workers and recording practices. An interviewee said "*there was a strategic direction and there were noises about needing to do something [to support the children and families of offenders] ... there was talking but now we're doing the doing [in the form of Hidden Sentence training delivery]*".

- **The Advocates role as a Single Point of Contact is highly valued:** community services reported considerable benefit of having one, highly visible and experienced contact. This was reported to be invaluable in helping them develop the work area. For example, one Children's Centre manager said "*it's great that [name of Advocate] has been a SPOC, so we can ask, who do we need to speak to? Knowing who the champion is and we can get an overview from the about what's happening in the prison*".
- **Created communication channels between prison and community-based organisations:** this was another of the project's major objectives and again evidence indicates that this has occurred with the agencies with who the project has worked. These communication channels are between prison services and family support/intervention services in the community. This has been achieved through the organisation and facilitation of meetings, both operational and strategic, which are attended by community and prison-based agencies. This has resulted in both sectors: developing knowledge and understanding of each other and the services they provide; and knowing who to contact should they need to. For example, one community-based family service said "*we know who to contact and they [prison] know who to contact ...*".

Another interviewee said "*it's enabled the prison to know who to make contact with [at the local authority] if they want to make contact [about a prisoner's family]*".

The Advocates are important members of the prisons' Children and Families Pathways and in some cases acting as the Chair. These are good vehicles with which to create linkages from the prison to the community and vice versa. There was also evidence to indicate that the Advocates were having an impact creating horizontal linkages between prison departments in relation to family work, for example in HMP Holme

House linkages have been improved between the Reducing Reoffending and Operations (who oversee visits) departments. These horizontal linkages are important at creating the institutional environment necessary in the implementation of the children and families work.

- **There continues to be a difficulty of identifying families in the community affected by imprisonment:** through the research for this evaluation, it became clear that this was the main barrier to the delivery of services to prisoners' families. This was viewed as a problem that required a solution. For example, one community-based service said "*we have created a momentum and an interest, now we have to find out how to identify the families that need our help*".

There have been efforts to attempt to do this but without success. For example, Gateshead Local Authority set up prisoner support groups in their children's centres but no-one turned up. Another attempt at identifying families was trialed by giving forms to new visiting families asking them if they had children under five. But there were no returns.

Some local authority staff reported that they felt able to ask the question of families, i.e. if a family member was in prison, but others said they did not. This may have had something to do with the type of service and the level of intervention they deliver. For example, in one local authority Troubled Families team, they had no issue with asking families. In another, family case workers from Children's Centres did not ask the question and they were reported to feel uncomfortable doing so.

Perhaps as a consequence of authorities not being able to identify those families affected, it was reported as "*not a massive issue for us [i.e. dealing with problems caused by the imprisonment of family member]*".

It is clear that this is an area of the workstream that needs further work. As one LSCB Officer said "*we need a regional approach to identifying families*".

- **The project has created a shift in attitudes towards imprisonment held by community family services:** this is an important impact of the project and has reversed a commonly held approach from community services. In the experience of domestic violence services, or support services who are working with a family where there is domestic abuse, when a perpetrator goes to prison, it is an opportunity to cease work with the family as they are considered safe from harm. As an illustration, one agency representative said "*we [support agencies] all give a sigh of relief that we can forget about that person whilst he's in prison ... out of sight and out of mind*". This workstream however (working with the children and families of people in prison) emphasises that when a person is in prison, it

is the time when most work needs to take place. The previous interviewee continued “*now it’s a case of when the person is in prison, we have to do the work with the family, instead of out of sight, out of mind ... and we can forget about them for a while because he’s in prison*”. They concluded by saying “*they [NEPACS] has turned a negative into a positive*”.

- **There is considerable potential for further developmental work:** there were numerous examples given during the research for this evaluation about the need and scope for further work to develop the workstream. This is evident in areas which include Hidden Sentence training and in pursuing the further identification of families affected by imprisonment in the community. In relation to the former, there is a role for the Advocates to continue to encourage and support those local authorities who have received Train the Trainer work but have not yet delivered the training. For those areas that have delivered training, they have expressed a need for the Advocates to continue to monitor that training, to feed in up-to-date policy and practice and to ensure that continuing capacity exists. In relation to identifying families, there are current attempts which need monitoring and testing and if successful, expanding. For example, in HMP Holme House, the Visitor Centre is trialing at the induction of new visiting families to new prisoners, completing a form with them which identifies if there have any children under five. If they do then a referral will be made to Children’s Centres. This is only currently in operation for Stockton families, but has potential to be completed for all North East authority areas.

There has been some evidence of integration to the programme, for example the IFSA and FSWs have worked together to develop Children and Families Pathways in prisons. However, this is certainly an area where the project can make improvements.

## **4.0 Conclusion and recommendations**

### **4.1 Conclusion**

We would like to conclude by summarising the impacts of the Integrated Family Support Programme, by type of worker and by major stakeholder.

#### **We have found that the Family Support Work has:**

- Increased contact between a prisoner and their children and family.
- Increased children and family provision in prisons.
- Resulted in self reported outcomes of a reduction in reoffending and increased happiness and well being of children.
- Improved prisoner behaviour and the mental health and well being of prisoners.

#### **The Integrated Family Support Advocates have:**

- Increased the awareness of the issues faced by children and families of prisoners as a result of the Hidden Sentence training.
- Created new policies within Children's Services and criminal justice agencies (for example, Integrated Offender Management and Probation) to support children and families of prisoners.
- Changed working practices of Children's Services to begin to try and support children and families of prisoners.
- Created a focus and a workstream on the children and families of offenders where there was previously none.

#### **For the prisons, the project has:**

- Resulted in a prison population that is calmer and easier to manage.
- Introduced a valued addition to the prison regime which has also impacted on changing a hard edged prison culture in certain establishments.
- Has changed and influenced the prison regimes to be more family friendly, including more training for staff and more family provision for prisoners.

- Energised, added value to and in some cases started the Children and Families Pathway.

**For local authorities, the work has:**

- Provided a valuable source of advice and expertise, where none previously existed.
- Stimulated new work areas which have improved performance in targeted areas of support, for example in Troubled Families.
- Improved and increased cooperation and coordination of services particularly between children and families and criminal justice agencies.

These multifaceted and wide reaching impacts indicate that the evidence base upon which this programme was developed was sound and well informed (i.e. NEPACS found a need, developed a workstream and delivered that work and the impacts were numerous). They also confirm that NEPACS' new area of expertise in prison based family support and family advocacy is effective in improving outcomes for prisoners and their families, i.e. NEPACS is achieving what it set out to do. We also see that there is an appetite for this work in both the prisons and in the community. Stakeholders feel it is good and worthwhile work to be involved in.

However, it needs to be pointed out that there is much more work to be done to continue the work across the region. Worthy targets would be to standardise policy and provision across the 12 North East local authorities and to have a FSW in each prison in the North East. A solution also needs to be found to identifying families affected by imprisonment in the community.

## 4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of this evaluation, we make several recommendations:

- In order to get a robust measure of the project's impact on reducing reoffending, we need to follow those who have received support and compare them (and their future offending) to a cohort who have not, or to the national average. We need to access data on individual prisoners supported, after a period of 12 months (the standard measure of reoffending) from the Police National Computer.
- The Advocates need to monitor the impact of their work on changing practice. This would necessitate contacting those agencies who have been worked with at regular intervals to ask them if there has been any practice changes and importantly how many families affected by imprisonment have been supported.
- The project needs to pay continued attention to the support of the FSWs. It can be a difficult and sometimes emotionally demanding job, which requires a good level of support and opportunities for sharing experiences.
- There needs to be FSWs in HMP Durham and HMP Northumberland.



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