



# **Evaluation of Pact's Supporting Young Parents in Prison Project**

**Dr Pamela Ugwudike**

Department of Sociology, Social Policy and  
Criminology, University of Southampton

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## 1. Acknowledgments

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, the term 'Family Engagement Worker/s' is used to describe the Pact staff, managers and volunteers who participated in the evaluation, in order to preserve their anonymity.

## 2. Summary

The Supporting Young Fathers in Prison (SYFP) project is delivered by Pact Cymru in prisons across Wales. The project advocates on behalf of young fathers in prison and their families. It brokers relevant services, provides therapeutic support, facilitates parenting efficacy, supports efforts to build relationships, and strengthens family ties.

Pact Cymru deliver this service through its prison-based Family Engagement Service (FES), and in collaboration with services within the prison and the wider community. Volunteers, Family Engagement Managers, and Family Engagement Coordinators offer one-to-one casework support to the men in prison and their families, refer them to relevant services, deliver parenting programmes, relationship courses and other related courses, help the men maintain contact with family members by organizing extra prison visits in family-friendly settings, and provide additional services to enhance the quality and outcome of prison visits for the men and their families.

The SYFP project's primary aim is to help men in prison engage with their families (their partners and children), to reduce the social isolation and traumatic impact of the separation associated with imprisonment. The project supports the men's efforts to maintain contact with their families and build good quality relationships. There is substantial research evidence that maintaining family ties during imprisonment can improve prisoners' behaviour, contribute to order in prison, reduce rates of longer term reoffending, and facilitate successful resettlement (Farmer 2017; HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2014; Markson et al. 2015).

The SYFP project also aims to direct parents in prison and their families to relevant services, improve the emotional and mental wellbeing of children affected by parental imprisonment, reduce the risk of intergenerational offending and encourage good practice in the field of family support within the prisons and the wider community. An additional aim is to develop good practice in the field of family support work within prisons and evaluate future provision across the prison estate.

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of SYFP. Pact Cymru commissioned the evaluation which generated qualitative and quantitative data to assess the quality and impact of service delivery by examining three key themes:

- The processes of service delivery
- The ways in which service delivery contribute the aforementioned primary aims
- How best to develop good practice and evaluate future provision across the prison estate.

The evaluation generated data from 50 semi-structured interviews. Pact workers, prison staff and men in three prisons (Prison A, Prison B and Prison C) participated in the interviews and family members were also interviewed. In addition, quantitative data generated from prisoners before and after their involvement with the SYFP project were analyzed.

Findings reveal that the project is not only considered to be vital by those delivering the project and the service users, it is also viewed as an indispensable service; there is no alternative provision in place within the Prisons visited. So far, the SYFP project has supported men in prison and their families by advocating on their behalf, brokering relevant services, providing therapeutic support, supporting parenting efficacy, building relationships, and strengthening family ties. The key findings of this evaluation are summarized below.

- The SYFP project broadens participation by disseminating information about the service in prison wings through volunteers, workers, peer mentors and others delivering the service, and also by displaying information flyers and hosting promotional activities.
- The SYFP project delivers its aim of improving the levels and quality of contact between men and prison and their families by organizing extra prison visits in more conducive settings. This is the provision the men and their families access the most.
- Men in prison believe that the SYFP project improves the frequency of contact and quality of relationships with their families and strengthens the bonds between them. It also improves their parenting ability, emotional wellbeing and behaviour.
- Staff and volunteers delivering the SYFP project provide extensive advocacy services. For example, they liaise with social services, visit schools to advocate on behalf of children affected by parental imprisonment.
- The service provides individualized support that is tailored to suit the needs of each parent in prison and his family. This approach is consistent with research which suggests that service users are more likely to engage with, and benefit from individualized services.
- Additional support provided by the SYFP project include brokering social welfare support for prisoners and their families. The extant international literature on evidence-based practice and key models of rehabilitation strongly emphasize that brokering access to relevant services can aid the desistance process.
- The SYFP project is desistance-focused; its role in strengthening bonds between prisoners and their families can encourage desistance. The desistance research literature emphasises that bonds with non-criminogenic family members promote desistance.
- The SYFP project provides opportunities for prisoners and their families to maintain ties and relationships. In doing so, the service aligns itself with research which emphasizes the role of families in supporting resettlement.
- The consensus amongst all those who participated in this evaluation is that Supporting Young Fathers in Prison project is an indispensable service and no other agency in the three participating prisons provides similar family support services.

## Recommendations

- Prisons should replace normal/ordinary prison visits with family-friendly visits such as those delivered by the SYFP project. SYFP visits strengthen relationships, improve behaviour in prison and aid the resettlement process. By contrast, normal/ordinary

prison visits are inimical to family relationships and the wellbeing of those involved (the visitors and the prisoners).

- Prisoners' children should be given frequent access to family-friendly visits. Normal prison visits limit the ability of children to interact and bond with their parent in prison. Infants and other very young children who are unable to understand prison regulations may not realize that their father is required to remain seated throughout a normal prison visit. It is therefore quite possible that the children construe their father's inability to move away from his seat and interact with them, as parental rejection which can be traumatic.
- Prisons should establish operational policies and communication channels in collaboration with family support services such as the SYFP project. This will ensure that services are not cancelled without adequate notice and prisoners are not transferred to other prisons without transfer plans and transitional family support arrangements. In addition, coordinating resettlement services with SYFP staff would strengthen resettlement provision.
- Prison policy should reflect the importance of family ties. The current policy of defining the prison visit as an earned incentive is inconsistent with the SYFP project's ethos which defines family support services, including family-friendly visits, as rights to which prisoners are entitled, not as earned incentives.
- Prisons should draw on insights from research on the key role of family members in supporting resettlement and desistance, and develop a commitment to fostering family ties by commissioning services such as the SYFP project and ensuring that their sustainability is not threatened by lack of funding.
- Funding is a crucial issue and the limitations it poses affects the scope of the SYFP project, and contributes to staff shortages. This was observed in Prisons B and C.
- The SYFP project should explore the possibility of introducing a domestic violence intervention that can where relevant, help equip the men with effective relationship skills and other skills required for avoiding the conflicts that damage family relationships.

### **3. Ethical Approval**

This evaluation received ethical approval from Swansea University's College of Law and Criminology's Research Ethics and Governance Committee in June 2016 while the researcher was based in the University. The researcher relocated to the University of Southampton in September 2017.

The proposal for the evaluation also underwent a protracted and rigorous vetting process by the National Offender Management's National Research Council (NOMS NRC). This vetting process assessed the quality of the proposed methodology and ethical considerations, and it lasted from August 2016 to March 2017. The study began in Prison A and Prison B in April 2017 and was extended to Prison C in July 2017.



## 4. Background

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) delivers the Supporting Young Fathers in Prison (SYFP) project. PACT is a charity that has since 1898 been supporting people affected by imprisonment in England and Wales. The charity defines its purpose as ‘providing support to prisoners, people with convictions, and their families’ (Pact 2017). It delivers several projects across the prison estate including:

- Family engagement work to help prisoners maintain ties with their family and friends
- Hosting a national helpline for prisoners’ families
- Delivering parenting and relationships programmes

### 4.1 Supporting Young Fathers in Prison

Helping people in prison maintain contact with their families in the community and strengthening family relationships, represent key aspects of the charity’s work. Through its Supporting Young Fathers in Prison (SYFP) project, the charity facilitates contact between prisoners and their families by arranging extra visits such as ‘baby groups’ and ‘family days’. PACT also advocates on behalf of prisoners and their families, provides casework support, delivers parenting courses, and brokers relevant local services. In delivering these services, it aims to ensure that men in prison can engage with their families (their partners and children) from prison and build strong relationships.

The Supporting Young Fathers in Prison project has been operating with a £939,494 award from the Big Lottery Fund since 2013 and it is four years old. It seeks to provide support to approximately 4280 young parents aged 18-25 affected by imprisonment. It is delivered in several prisons and this report presents the interim findings of an evaluation of project delivery in three prisons (Prison A, Prison B, and Prison C). The prisons are not named in this report, to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Prison A is a Category B prison that holds men from a local area in Wales. Most of the men are either serving short sentences of 12 weeks or less, awaiting transfer to another prison or on remand awaiting trial. The prison states that it provides access to education, training, and employment within the prisons. There is a resettlement unit and other services available for those approaching release. Prison B is also a local Category B male prison for young adults and it states that it provides coping, substance misuse, educational, training, resettlement, peer support and other services. By contrast, Prison C is an adult male open category D prison. The men in this prison are eligible to apply for a Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) after 5 weeks in the prison and this grants them weekend access to the community. The prison claims to offer educational provision, vocational training opportunities, work placements, and other services.

This evaluation of SYFP assessed whether service delivery was in line with the projected aims listed below.

## 4.2 Aims of the Supporting Young Fathers in Prison project

The project's aims are as follows – to support young parents in prison through casework support for the men and their partner in the community and parenting programmes. In providing this support, the project aims to produce the following outcomes:

- Young parents affected by imprisonment are less socially isolated through the engagement with peer support and identification of appropriate support mechanisms.
- Young parents in the prison and in the community, receive individualised support and co-ordinated interventions through specific assessments and family-agreed plans.
- Families have improved their parenting skills, leading to improved outcomes for children, reduction in reoffending and successful resettlement into the community.
- Practitioners and policy makers are better informed about the specific needs of young parents affected by imprisonment and consider their needs in the development of future policy and practice.

This evaluation sought to identify the ways in which project delivery contributes to the outcomes outlined above. It drew on existing findings from research studies that have reviewed similar projects for young parents in prison and their families (Boswell and Wedge 2007; Dominey 2016). As such, the evaluation employed qualitative methods to interview key parties. Its principal purpose was to identify and describe in detail, the processes of delivering the project, and the practices that are linked to best outcomes for young parents in prison and their families.

## 4.3 Mode of delivery

The SYFP project is delivered by Pact's Family Engagement Service (FES). Young parents access the project primarily through the proactive activities of FEWs, volunteers and peer mentors, in advertising and promoting the service in prison wings. Service users and their families also gain access to the service through the following avenues:

- self-referral;
- referral by prison staff, external agencies, family members, and other prisoners;
- information provided in leaflets, flyers and other written material available in visiting centres and prison wings.

FEWs routinely visit prison wings to inform young fathers of the scheme and to ask if they need support or assistance to engage with their family. Prisoners' families are also contacted by FEWs (with the prisoners' consent) and informed of the service. In addition, the service is promoted on social media through a dedicated Twitter account. The objective of these proactive activities is to ensure that young fathers and their families are given the opportunity to engage with the project and benefit from its services.

Up to July 2017, the project had assessed 2716 men in custody. Of this number, 1011 (37%) received intensive casework support, guided by family action plans which were agreed between the father in custody and parent/carer in the community. 1300 young parents (48%) attended

courses and groups to improve knowledge and parenting skills. Volunteer mentors and case support workers were trained and inducted, and child-focused interventions titled ‘Ask William’ and ‘Therapeutic Play Outreach Project’ were introduced. 1085 families (40%) were linkeded to services in the community which provided relevant support. Examples of these services are ‘Dads Can’, Atal Y Fro, local TAF services, drug projects, Action for Children and Barnardo’s services. 276 families (10%) received intensive resettlement support guided by specific resettlement plans, involving resettlement conferencing and support from volunteer mentors who provided assistance with attending appointments, prison visits, talking to children about their father’s imprisonment and engaging with local schools. A pilot of a domestic abuse perpetrator course was delivered and three national conferences were held. Workshops for those working with families affected by imprisonment were held, including working with families where sexual offenses have been committed, Hidden Sentence, Bridging the Wall, ‘Telling the Children’, reflective practice workshops and networking events and forums.

The men in prison who participated in this research indicated that they and their families had benefited from these services. The service the men accessed the most was the extra visits organized by SYFP. These are Family-friendly visits known as Baby Group, Toddler Group, and Family Day. 23 of the 27 men interviewed accessed these services. The remaining four were peer mentors (rather than service users) who were working with the SYFP project in Prison C.

Baby group is a visiting scheme for children from birth to 12 months and their parents. It is delivered to up to ten men at a time and participating in baby group does not affect entitlement to normal visits. The focus of the group is to help fathers form attachments with their child/ren. Toddler Group is for children over 12 months and under three years. It is currently not available in Prison A. Pact also runs a visiting scheme for the men and their families known as ‘family day’. This again counts as an additional visit that does not impinge on the men’s right to their normal visits.

Other services delivered by Pact to help the men build relationships with their children include the ‘Storybook Dads’ scheme which is also available in several other prisons. It is a scheme that gives the men the opportunity to record stories for their children on a Compact Disc (CD). The CD is then edited to remove grammatical and other errors, and is made available to their child. Through ‘Storybook Dads’ the men parent their child/ren from prison.

Parenting and relationship courses are also offered by the project, and the courses engage the men in processes and activities that are designed to help them continue parenting from prison. An example of the courses available is Time to Connect which is a parenting and relationship course for imprisoned parents. A key objective of the course is to help parents learn how to play with children so they can communicate effectively with them, form good relationships and contribute to their development and whilst in custody. Course participants attend 4 workshops over 2 or 4 days and the course explores the ways in which parental imprisonment affect children, the importance of maintaining ties, and effective parenting. Family Days and

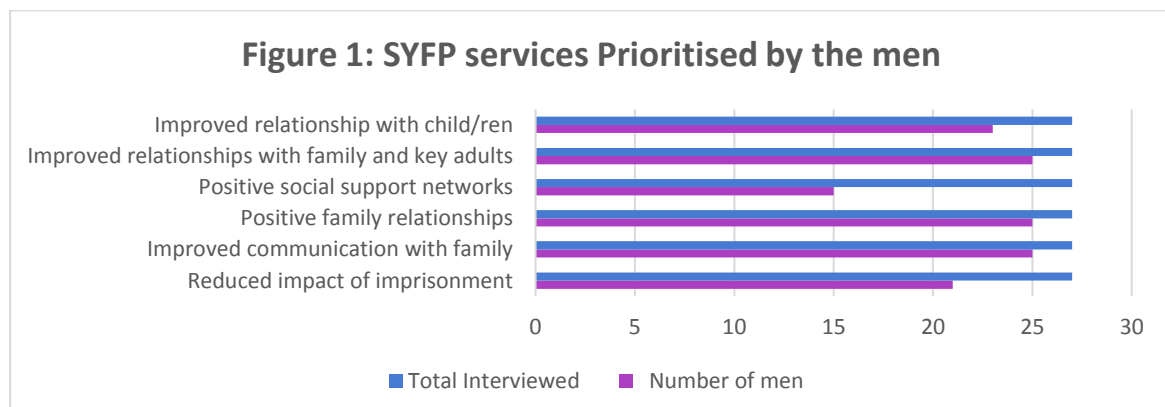
Baby Groups offer Time to Connect participants the opportunity to practice the skills and apply the knowledge they have acquired from the programme.

Most of the men interviewed planned to attend parenting and relationship courses and had either been registered for the courses or were waiting to be registered. Added to the parenting and relationship courses, the FEWs delivering the SYFP project liaise with external services such as social services on behalf of the men. Where relevant and in the child/ren's best interests, they liaise with the courts and social services to remove legal constraints preventing contact between the men and their child/ren.

There are differences between the three prisons in the visitation services provided. Whilst the three visiting services mentioned earlier (baby group, toddler group and family day) are available in Prison B, Prison A offer baby group and family day visits but not Toddler Group. Prison C provides family day visits less frequently than the other two visits. In general, a comparatively limited service is available in Prison C perhaps because the men are permitted to visit their families after the first three months, provided they meet relevant security and other criteria. Recommendations on how to address the differences in provision are addressed later in this report.

Overall, the findings of this evaluation indicate that it is a well-organized and well-coordinated service that is individualized (tailored to suit individual needs), and deemed indispensable by the prisoners, their families, prison staff, and Pact project staff. The SYFP project uses the Pact Relationship Radar to assess the impact of Pact's services on family relationships, parenting and wellbeing. Figure 1 below sets out the measures of impact contained in the radar and the number of men who identified the measures as central to their involvement in the SYFP project. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the men were mostly interested in services that were directly related to communicating or maintaining relationships with family members.

Radar outcome measures informed the empirical questions applied in this study. Interviews with key stakeholders involved in the SYFP project addressed the processes involved in achieving the outcomes. Radar data generated from the men before and after their involvement in the project were also examined to examine whether participating in the project was associated with positive changes in the key areas assessed by the Radar and set out in Figure 1 below.



## 5. Introduction

### 5.1 Literature Review

Studies and statistics indicate that enhancing the quality of prisoners' relationships with their families can help maintain order in prisons, reduce reoffending, and encourage desistance (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy 2016; Murray et al. 2012; Ministry of Justice). Indeed, in criminological research, it is now well established that improving the social circumstances of people undertaking court orders (by for example, improving family relationships) is vital for achieving positive behavioral change and eventual (secondary) desistance from crime (Farrall et al. 2014; Maruna 2001; Weaver 2014).

The Bourdieusian concept of social capital alerts us to the mechanisms through which family bonds can encourage desistance (see also Bourdieu 1986; Ugwudike 2017a and 2017b). Broadly conceived, social capital inheres in relationships or connections with non-criminogenic family and friends, and with agencies that provide resources required for social inclusion or full citizenship (Farrall 2002; Sampson and Laub 1993; Ugwudike 2017b).

Added to the impact of close family bonds on desistance, studies and official reports emphasize that maintaining good family relationships during imprisonment is vital because family members play an important role in the resettlement process (Farmer 2017; HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2014; Markson et al. 2015). Some do however suggest that resettlement services should be provided by the state and not imposed on families who typically lack the means or resources to provide sustainable resettlement support (Codd 2007). But, studies reveal that family members do play an important role in offering practical support in the form of providing accommodation, employment opportunities and other forms of support (Farrall 2004, Farrall et al. 2014). Indeed, the role of families in providing such support has been cited an example of the social capital service users accrue from good family relationships and strong social networks. Farrall (2004: 65) notes that: 'Employment and familial support networks also represent two of the most frequently cited sources of social capital.'

This evaluation seeks to expand the very limited research on the processes of supporting young men in prison and their families; it will identify approaches that improve the social circumstances of young men in prison by strengthening their bonds with their families. Studies consistently identify 'relationship needs' as one of several factors that are linked to reoffending, and many people in prisons across England and Wales have 'multiple, complex needs' in this area (Wood et al. 2015: 1). Studies also reveal that imprisonment can: sever family ties, exacerbate the social exclusion of prisoners, increase the likelihood that their family members will engage in long-term criminality, and also produce adverse psychological and other implications for prisoners and their families (Light and Campbell 2007; Murray et al. 2012).

The seminal study by Roger Shaw (1992) interviewed the children of imprisoned fathers. The study found evidence that having a father in prison is linked to psychological trauma and behavioral problems. Other more recent studies reinforce these findings (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012). Studies that have explored the experiences of female prisoners and their children have recorded similar findings (Niven and Stewart 2005). It has also been noted that other family members such as parents, grandparents, spouses and siblings experience similar problems (Paylour; Smith et al. 2007). Smith and colleagues' (2007) report of a study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that prisoners' families experience severe financial difficulties and accommodation problems, particularly where the prisoner used to be the breadwinner.

This evaluation builds on studies which show that introducing services that help maintain or repair prisoners' ties with their families can ameliorate the adverse impact of imprisonment. A key example is the study by Boswell and colleagues (2010) which evaluated a project in four English prisons that provided family support services to enhance the quality of prisoners' relationships with their families. The evaluation found that the Family Support Workers involved in the project helped improve levels of family contact. They also improved the social circumstances of the prisoners and their families. Furthermore, the evaluation found evidence that the services provided helped to alleviate the negative experiences of the prisoners' children.

Added to studies which reveal the importance of enhancing the social circumstances of prisoners and their families, studies also reveal that projects similar to SYFP can help enhance their personal attributes, which as noted earlier, is linked to positive behavioral change and secondary (permanent) desistance (Maruna 2001). Indeed, Boswell and colleagues' (2010) evaluations did find that the Family Support Workers involved in the project helped to improve the participating prisoners' (and their families') emotional/mental health, quality of parenting, and ability to manage financial resources. In other words, the services provided, helped prisoners develop positive personal attributes.

Large-scale meta-analytic reviews of the literature on criminal justice interventions have similarly shown that added to their social circumstances, improving the personal attributes of individuals undertaking court orders in prison or the community, by equipping them with the skills and attributes required for improving their social circumstances and reducing their social isolation can help reduce rates of reoffending (see generally Andrews and Bonta 2010 and promote desistance (Farrall et al. 2014).

This evaluation seeks to expand on these insights from the academic literature by reviewing the Supporting Parents in Prison initiative to identify and highlight the best means of deploying the resources provided under the auspices of the initiative to the overall aims of: reducing reoffending, encouraging desistance and maintaining order in prisons. As already noted, the resources provided include peer mentoring, parenting courses, family casework support, and family days.

## 5.2 The Evaluation

PACT Cymru introduced the SYFP project in partnership with several prisons. The project's primary aim is to provide parenting and other support for young parents in prison and their families. This evaluation was commissioned by Pact Cymru, and it assessed whether the process of service delivery was geared towards the project's target outcomes as set out below:

- Young parents affected by imprisonment are less socially isolated through the engagement with peer support and identification of appropriate support mechanisms.
- Young parents in the prison and in the community, receive individualised support and co-ordinated interventions through specific assessments and family-agreed plans
- Families have improved their parenting skills, leading to improved outcomes for children, reduction in reoffending and successful resettlement into the community
- Practitioners and policy makers are better informed about the specific needs of young parents affected by imprisonment and consider their needs in the development of future policy and practice

These projected outcomes were reformulated into six empirical questions which sought to assess whether the service was being implemented as planned, the processes involved in delivering the project, and the association between service delivery processes and the project's target outcomes:

1. How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?
2. How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?
3. How does the project direct parents in prison and their families to relevant sources of support?
4. How does the project support the parent in prison's resettlement plans?
5. How are the processes of delivering the project associated with its key objectives?
6. What are the best approaches to improving future provision across the prison estate and in the community?

The first four questions above were integrated into semi-structured interview schedules that were used to generate in-depth data from service users (parents in prison and their families), FEWs, and prison staff (see Appendices 1-3). Question 5 informed phase 2 of the study which is the quantitative phase. The recommendations of this report addressed the final question.

A researcher based in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Southampton<sup>2</sup> designed the evaluation and generated the relevant data, supported by two Research Assistants. The methods set out below were chosen because they were deemed most suitable for generating the data that would answer the research questions. The methods were also manageable and ethical given the limited timescale available for the research.

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<sup>2</sup>The researcher was initially based in the College of Law and Criminology at Swansea University.

### 5.3 The Evaluation Plan

An application for permission to access the selected prisons was submitted to NOMS NRC in August 2016 and the funder set a report submission date of August 2017. To ameliorate the problem of the limited timescale available for the research, the researcher completed the following preliminary tasks whilst awaiting approval from NOMS NRC to proceed with the study:

- The researcher sought and obtained the ethical approval of the relevant academic body; the College of Law and Criminology (Swansea University)
- The researcher attended a meeting that brought together all the parties involved in delivering SYFP. A key issue discussed during the meeting was the appropriate allocation of tasks given the limited time available for the study.
- Those present at the meeting of the steering group were: A Family Support Worker; six Family Engagement Workers; a volunteer coordinator, the project manager, and the Head of Service Delivery and Development, Pact Cymru and South West England, who is based in HMP Swansea.
- During the meeting, the researcher presented in detail, the data and other information that would be required for the research. These were deemed readily available and routinely generated data:
  - PACT Relationship Radar data
  - Adjudication records/data
- It was noted that those delivering the project routinely collect and collate this information and they would make the data available to the researchers.
- During the meeting, it was also agreed that the best sampling approach within the limited timescale available would be for staff to recruit the parents in prison and their families during routine casework sessions. This worked particularly well in the study by Smith and Colleagues (2003).
- All those present at the meeting agreed that the main contact for information about the evaluation's progress would be: the lead researcher, and the Head of Service Delivery and Development, Pact Cymru and South West England.

Creating the steering group and identifying key contacts helped to maintain adequate lines of communication, and this was vital for ensuring that key tasks were completed with minimal delay. In March 2017, NOMS NRC granted the researcher permission to conduct the evaluation which began in April 2017 and ended at the end of September 2017.



## 6. The Evaluation Methodology

As already noted, the methods employed for this evaluation were selected because they were deemed appropriate for generating the relevant data. The methods were also manageable and ethical in the light of the timescale available.

The evaluation employed mixed methods and the objective was to ensure that a robust and comprehensive review of the processes and outcomes of project delivery could be conducted. The qualitative dimension of the study involved semi-structured interviews with service users (the men in prison and their families), FEWs, volunteers, peer mentors, managers, and prison staff. FEWs, volunteers and peer mentors are all identified as FEWs in this report to protect their anonymity and the confidentiality of data. The interviews yielded in-depth data on the processes of service delivery.

The study also had a quantitative dimension which involved the collection and analysis of quantitative data to assess the impact of service delivery. The quantitative data derived from performance records routinely generated by FEWs with the Pact Relationship Radar and the Tool of Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE). Both tools are useful for assessing the impact/effectiveness of services such as the SYFP project.

### 6.1 Phase 1: Qualitative data collection

The evaluation aimed to achieve 56 interviews across the participating prisons (please see Table 1). This number was sufficient for qualitative data collection and analysis, and was considered likely to yield in-depth insights that would illuminate the processes of service delivery. However, as Table 2 indicates, 50 interviews were eventually achieved. The study did not attain the target number of 56 and the shortfall was mainly the upshot of challenges associated with recruiting enough family members. These challenges are outlined later.

#### *The men in prison*

With respect to the men in prison, Table 1 below indicates that the target sample was 20 men in prison (10 in Prison A and 10 in Prison B)<sup>3</sup>. However, most of the men interviewed (15 out of 27) were based in Prison A and 6 in Prison B.

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<sup>3</sup> The original target of 40 service users comprising 20 parents in prison and their families (20 parents in the community) was deemed acceptable because it equated to the number of prisoners and families who engaged directly with the SYFP project in 2016. In addition, the limited timescale available for data collection and analysis meant that a larger number of participants would have made the project unmanageable.

The high turnover of prisoners in Prisons A and B meant that the target number of 10 men in each of the two prisons who had been involved in the project for at least two months, could not be attained.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, a decision made to extend the study to Prison C (with permission from NOMS NRC) to reach more men and additional 8 men were interviewed in the prison. Therefore, as the Table above shows, 27 men in total were interviewed (see also, Table 2).

**Table 1: Target sample and achieved sample**

	<b>Achieved Interviews</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Men in prison</b>	27	20
<b>Family members</b>	11	20
<b>Pact Project staff</b>	8	6
<b>Prison staff</b>	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>

The study focused on men in prison who had received services provided by the SYFP project for at least 2 months before the interviews. A longer timeframe would have been preferable; prisoners and families who had accessed the project over a longer period may have provided more comprehensive insights into the processes and impact of service delivery. But, we had to limit the timeframe to two months because Prison A and Prison B have a high turnover rate; prisoners only stayed in the prisons for very short periods and were often transferred to other prisons with limited or no notification to SYFP staff.

Table 2 below shows that the men serving sentences of over 4 years made up the largest proportion of men interviewed (33%) whilst those on remand constituted the second largest proportion (26%). All the other men were serving different sentences below 4 years. Most (60%) were aged 25 years or under, which is the age range targeted by the SYFP project and most (88%) described their ethnicity as 'White British'.

Semi-structured interviews with the men in Prison A were conducted on visit days in private offices reserved for confidential 'legal visits'. This method was adopted because it had proved successful in previous studies where prisoners and their visitors were interviewed in visiting centres (see for example, Boswell et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2003). It was also adopted because it was envisaged that the prisoners and their families would all be in one setting, and adequate security measures would be in place to ensure the safety of the research participants and the researcher.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, some of the men who were due to participate in all three prisons; Prison B; Prison A; and Prison C, were transferred to other prisons (without notice to Pact staff) before or on the day of the scheduled interview. Consequently, scheduled interviews with the men had to be cancelled.

This approach appears to be the least obstructive to the prisoners, their families, prison staff, and the staff delivering the project. To protect the confidentiality of the information the participants provide during interviews, the interviews were held in private ‘legal visits’ room near the visiting area but before the visits started. This approach proved to be the least disruptive approach to interviewing the men in prison.

**Table 2: The parents in prison**

No.	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Prison Status	Sentence
1	27	White British	Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
2	20	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
3	21	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
4	27	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
5	29	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
6	25	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
7	21	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Over 4 years
8	26	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	No fixed time
9	30	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	No fixed time
10	25	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	12months-4 years
11	24	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	12months-4 years
12	27	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Between 6-12 months
13	23	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Between 6-12 months
14	23	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Between 6-12 months
15	25	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Between 6-12 months
16	26	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Between 6-12 months
17	27	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	3-6 months
18	30	Black British African	Not Married	Recall	3 -6 months
19	27	White British	Not Married	Recall	3 – 6 months
20	21	White British	Not Married	Sentenced	Less than 3 months
21	22	White British	Not Married	Remand	-

22	24	Black British A/Caribbean	Not Married	Remand	-
23	30	Asian/Pakistani British	Not Married	Remand	-
24	23	White British	Not Married	Remand	-
25	20	White British	Not Married	Remand	
26	22	White British	Not Married	Remand	
27	25	White British	Not Married	Remand	

A FEW attended the first four interviews with the prisoners to help clarify any unclear questions. These interviews served as a means of piloting the semi-structured schedule and refining the questions to address any ambiguities. The semi-structured interviews with men in Prison B were conducted in a private office within the prison. Only two men were interviewed and it subsequently became difficult to recruit additional men in Prison B. This is perhaps because of the high rate at which prisoners are transferred from Prison B to other prisons, particularly those serving sentences of more than 12-18 months.

As noted earlier, to recruit additional participants, a decision was made to extend the study to Prison C (with the permission of NOMS NRC). Four men were interviewed in Prison C over the phone. The interviews were organised by a Pact project worker who gave the men access to a telephone in an office within the prison. The researcher was informed that no one else was present in the office during each interview.

Interviews with men in the three prisons explored the processes of supporting young fathers in prison to engage in their child's life from prison. Previous evaluations of Pact's family support services show that such support is provided in several prisons across the country by Pact workers such as Family Engagement Workers, Family Support Workers, and volunteer coordinators (Boswell 2006; Dominey 2016). Therefore, the semi-structured interview schedules utilised for the current evaluation comprised questions which were in part designed with insights from the previous evaluations. There were also questions based on statistics which consistently identify 'relationship needs' as one of several factors that are linked to reoffending, and note that many people in prisons across England and Wales have 'multiple, complex needs' in this area (see for example, Wood et al. 2015: 1).

Therefore, the interviews with men in prison generated their views about the nature and impact of the support available through the scheme. There were also questions about the unique difficulties people in prison and their families encounter as a direct result of imprisonment. Examples include financial hardship and accommodation issues (Smith et al. 2007) and broken family ties which can produce adverse physical and mental impacts on prisoners and their families (Light and Campbell 2007).

In addition, the men were asked to describe the support they had received to aid their resettlement in the community when they leave prison. Studies highlight the importance of working with prisoners and their families to access relevant resettlement services (Codd 2007; Edgar et al. 2011).

#### *Parents in community*

This evaluation also examined the views of prisoners' partners about the SYFP project. As Table 3 below illustrates, although the study sought to interview 10 prisoners' partners in Prison A and 10 in Prison B, 11 interviews were eventually achieved in both prisons.

**Table 3: Semi-structured interviews with family members**

	<b>Achieved Interviews</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>Prison A</b>	9	10
<b>Prison B</b>	2	10
<b>Prison C</b>	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>

Attempts were made to conduct telephone interviews with all the prisoners' partners who had given their consent to participate in the study. But, it was difficult to arrange a suitable time for the interviews. An issue that exacerbated matters was the inability of family members to contact the researcher directly on her private telephone number given the recommendations of NOMS NRC that the researcher should not divulge personal contact details. Purchasing a pay-as-you-go telephone and making the number accessible to family members was considered a possible solution. Furthermore, some interviews were subsequently scheduled for a visit day in Prison A and four additional prisoners' partners members were eventually interviewed in that prison, in a private 'legal visits' room.

The semi-structured interview schedules utilised for interviews with men in prison and their partners comprised questions derived from the extant research literature (see Appendices 1 and 2). Integrated into the schedules were questions about the financial impact of having a partner in prison (Smith et al. 2007), the impact on relationships (Light and Campbell 2007), the physical, behavioural and emotional impact on children (Shaw 1992) and a range of other problems identified by the relevant research literature (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012). There were also questions about the nature and impact of services they accessed through the SYFP project. The questions were based on studies which show that supporting young parents affected by imprisonment by referring them to relevant social welfare services and providing avenues for them to engage in parenting and other courses that enhance their abilities as parents, can help break the cycle of crime (Sherlock, 2004). Furthermore, there is evidence that services aimed at improving parenting skills and relationships produce positive outcomes for children who have a parent(s) in custody (Pallot & Katz, 2014).

The interview schedule also comprised questions about the resettlement services available in line with the aims of the project. Desistance studies reveal that fostering family ties can significantly aid key dimensions of resettlement such as securing accommodation and finding suitable employment; family members can provide accommodation and the links and information required for securing lawful employment (Farrall et al. 2014).

#### *Family Engagement Workers and Prison Staff*

The study sought to generate data from 3 prison staff (in each of the two prisons), who had in the course of their work, had some contact with prisoners participating in the project and were as such, best placed to offer insights into the processes and possible impact of service delivery.

It was envisaged that ideally, two prison officers and a governor grade staff from Prison A and Prison B<sup>5</sup> would participate in the interviews. The evaluation also sought to interview three FEWs directly responsible for delivering the SYFP project in each of the two prisons. Eventually, the limited availability of some staff and the short time frame available for the evaluation meant that a total of twelve prison staff and FEWs were interviewed. Of the twelve, four FEWs and two prison officers were interviewed in Prison A, two FEWs and three prison staff (two officers and a probation officer) in Prison B, and one FEW in Prison C.

Interviews with prison staff and FEWs were held either in prison (in private offices reserved for legal visits), in other private offices, or over the telephone at the staff member's convenience. The semi-structured interviews assessed how the SYFP project's aims were achieved and the key issue explored was the participants' views about the processes of delivering the SYFP project. There were questions about the support provided to strengthen relationships between prisoners and their families. The interviews also explored obstacles to effective service delivery and the semi-structured schedules were based on insights from relevant research (see Appendix 3).

Questions about the processes involved in directing prisoners and their families to relevant services were also included in the interview schedules. The questions derived from research on the unique difficulties prisoners and their families encounter as a direct result of imprisonment. Examples include financial difficulties, severed family ties, isolation, stigmatisation and other similarly adverse problems (Smith et al. 2007; Light and Campbell 2007; Shaw 1992; Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012).

#### *The semi-structured interviews*

The semi-structured interviews assessed the processes of achieving the following project aims:

- Young parents affected by imprisonment are less socially isolated through the engagement with peer support and identification of appropriate support mechanisms.
- Young parents in the prison and in the community, receive individualised support and co-ordinated interventions through specific assessments and family-agreed plans
- Families have improved their parenting skills, leading to improved outcomes for children, reduction in reoffending and successful resettlement into the community

<sup>5</sup> Prison C was not included in the original evaluation plan.

- Practitioners and policy makers are better informed about the specific needs of young parents affected by imprisonment and consider their needs in the development of future policy and practice.

These aims were translated into the following research questions:

1. How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?
2. How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?
3. How does the project direct parents in prison and their families to relevant sources of support?
4. How does the project support the parent in prison's resettlement plans?
5. How are the processes of delivering the project associated with its key objectives?
6. What are the best approaches to improving future provision across the prison estate and in the community?

Whilst the interview schedule was used to assess the first four questions, quantitative methods described below were used to answer the 5<sup>th</sup> question. The final question was addressed by summarising the findings of the study and outlining several key recommendations.

## 6.2 Phase 2: Quantitative data collection

### *Pact Relationship Radar*

As mentioned earlier, during the meeting of the steering group involved in this evaluation, it was agreed that data from the PACT Relationship Radar would be made readily available for analysis as they are routinely generated data. The radar comprises domains that assess the following to examine whether Pact's family support services are producing a positive impact:

- Improved relationship with children
- Improved relationships with family and key adults
- Positive social support networks
- Positive family relationships
- Improved communication with family
- Reduced impact of imprisonment

It was also agreed during the meeting that adjudication records/data will be made available to facilitate an analysis of the impact of the project on behaviour in prison; reductions in rates of negative adjudications would indicate improvements. Eventually, only Pact Radar data were made available but an analysis of data generated with the Tool for Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE) was used to supplement the radar data.

### *Tool for Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE)*

TOPSE is used to evaluate parenting programmes and is useful for assessing the impact/effectiveness of projects. TOPSE is a multi-dimensional instrument of 48 statements within eight scales: Emotion and affection, Play and enjoyment, Empathy and understanding,

Control, Discipline and boundary setting, Pressure, Self-acceptance and Learning and knowledge.

In sum, quantitative data analysis was based on two sources of data:

- Before and after Pact Relationship Radar data on 14 men
- Before and after TOPSE data for 65 men over four years – to assess the project's longer-term impact.

### **6.3 Methodological limitations**

The main limitation of this evaluation relates to the generalizability of its findings. Similar to other studies that employ a small convenience sample, the evaluation's findings are not necessarily generalisable; it is possible that the selected participants' views do not reflect the views of all those involved in the project across the three prisons.

### **Ethical considerations**

The researcher undertook to protect the rights of research participants, and maintain the confidentiality and security of research data. Therefore, the data generated for the evaluation from, or in respect of all the participants, were stored securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, codes were used instead of names, and every effort was made to remove any identifying information from the data. Extra measures were taken to ensure that the participants would not be identifiable in this report; their views were not linked to any identifying categories such as gender and prison.

The participants were also made fully aware of their rights. They were invited to read and sign an informed consent form which invited them to confirm their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study. The form informed them of their right to withdraw at any stage and sought their permission to access project data. It was made clear to the men in prison that if they decided to withdraw from the interview, their individual data could still form part of the dataset used for analysis. The informed consent form made this clear. The form also contained information about the aims of the study and how the information generated from participants would be stored to ensure data security.



## 7. PHASE ONE: FINDINGS FROM SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (the parents in prison, their partners, the FEWs, and prison staff) lasted an average of 30-45 minutes and the interviews were recorded (with the permission of the participants) and subsequently transcribed. The interview data were then coded and analyzed to identify key themes which were developed through comparison with theoretical and empirical insights from existing studies. Thematic analysis is useful for analysing the in-depth views of research participants in order to understand the meanings with which they define their interactions and experiences (Braun and Clark 2006). In the current study, thematic analysis involved reading and re-reading the semi-structured interview data and categorising them into descriptive codes which enabled the researcher to identify common themes or patterns inherent in the participants' views. The aim of thematic analysis was to help answer the aforementioned empirical questions.

The semi-structured interviews several themes. Collectively, the themes indicate that the key stakeholders view the project as indispensable and vital for ensuring that young fathers in prison maintain contact and positive relationships with their partners and children<sup>6</sup>. The themes identified were as follows: the service plays an active role in: reducing the social isolation of fathers in prison; providing individualised case work support to the men and their families; delivering coordinated interventions; and providing opportunities for parents in prison to improve their parenting and relationship skills. Involvement in the project improves parenting self-efficacy, the wellbeing of parents in prison, and good behaviour in prison. These outcomes complement one of NOMS' key responsibilities which is to 'make sure support is available to stop people offending again' (NOMS 2017). What follows below is an elaboration of the themes that emerged from the evaluation. The themes illuminate the processes and outcomes of delivering the project.

### 7.1 Accessing the SYFP project

First, the evaluation examined how service users become aware of the service and the strategies in place for broadening access to ensure that all eligible prisoners are able to benefit from the SYFP project. Enabling access is vital for achieving a key outcome of the service which is to 'reduce the social isolation of young parents in prison'.

Interviews with the men in prison, project staff, and prison staff, revealed that slightly different strategies are employed in the three prisons. In Prison A, volunteers and peer mentors are present in the induction wing to help advertise the service and contribute to the effort to broaden participation and ensure that the service is made available to all those who can benefit from the support provided. Here, a FEW in Prison A describes the processes of broadening participation

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<sup>6</sup> The study did not achieve the anticipated number of participants in Prison B and although four men were interviewed in Prison C, most of the data emerged from interviews with men in Prison A and their families. Consequently, it was not possible to include in this evaluation report, comparative descriptions of similarities and differences in service delivery within the three prisons.

in the project: ‘We’ve got a peer on the induction wing who sees everybody that comes into custody. They will inform them of the services that we offer and ask them if it is something they want to engage in’. In addition, FEWs are present in the induction wing and they inform new entrants of the service: ‘we [the FEWs] see all the men on induction so when a new enter in the prison, we meet all of them, and chat through our service and they could see what we are and what we can do.’ In Prison C, peer mentors are present in the induction wing and visiting centres to inform the men and their families of the project, and one of the peer mentors said: ‘When prisoners arrive at [Prison C], it is my duty to induct them and tell those individuals about Pact and what they offer’.

In Prison B, the SYFP project aligns itself with the formal prison induction process. A FEW in that prison attends the prison induction board and informs new prisoners of the project, and she said: ‘I’ll see the guys in induction to see if they need any help with their families, especially the first timers. The Probation Officer interviewed in Prison B confirmed this: ‘I know that [the FEW] goes on the induction board every morning. I know that they [the prisoners] are asked about their family and whether they want to have any contact with them. So, every single prisoner, in theory, is seen the morning after they’ve come in. It’s quite a small prison, so, everybody knows about Pact and about family day and stuff like that’.

Added to the information provided to new entrants into the prison, there are information leaflets and notices about the project within the three prisons and the men interviewed in all three prisons acknowledged the work done to publicise the SYFP project. One of the men interviewed in Prison A said ‘there’s signposting all around the prison and obviously, the girls [FEWs]<sup>7</sup> are constantly round the wings. I mean they constantly there always around ... they’re making sure that everyone’s family ties are kept basically’.

#### **Publicising the SYFP Project to broaden access**

All the participants were asked to describe how service users access the project. Here, one of the men in prison describes how he came to now about the project. His views encapsulate the descriptions provided by the other participants:

When I first come in they [the FEWs] come round to the wing to see me as soon as I come in and asked if I have any children and stuff and I told them I did and fair play to them, as soon as the baby was born, I was on it [SYFP project]. A couple of days later, I was on Baby Group. It’s been brilliant, I never would have got to change [my baby], I wouldn’t have got to bathe her, you know, feed her, stuff like that. All things that mean the world to you, you never get those back will you?

The FEWs delivering the project also described the strategies employed to advertised the project widely in order to engage as many service users as possible. Advertising the project was considered to be a crucial first step towards achieving the service’s aim of reducing the

<sup>7</sup> Individuals' names have been redacted to preserve data confidentiality.

social isolation of young parents affected by imprisonment. For example, one of the FEWs in Prison A said: ‘we’ve got a PACT menu, so that’s like all our different services that we run, and that’s on every wing, and I think we’re putting them in all the workshops as well, so the men can see all the services that we run. We’ve also put one of them in the visitor centre so families can access that information as well. Leaflets, things like that, are in there as well’.

FEWs also notify the men’s partners of the service. With the men’s permission, the FEWs initiate contact with their partners to give them detailed information about the services provided. One of the FEWs summarised the process: ‘It’s [my role is] also liaising with family members as well, so that can be contacting partners or ex-partners, informing them about things like baby group and family days, so bringing the children. And it also is liaising with other family members, so people’s parents or brothers and sisters and things like that’. The men interviewed in the three prisons attested to this: ‘They (FEWS) said they’d phone my girlfriend on the outside and speak to her about family days which they did because I spoke to her yesterday, she said that she spoke to them’. Indeed, the men and their partners were similar in the way they explained their experiences of the SYFP project. Their partners stated that leaflets and other forms of advertisement promoting the service were readily accessible in the visiting areas. The prisoner’s partners were also notified of the SYFP project by the FEWs who contacted them (with the men’s permission) to inform them of the resources available, as this prisoner’s partner noted: [a FEW] rang me but I was having him [the baby] and she rang me the other day, she was talking about his dad, my partner and she said it was about the Baby Group. And he put his name down for it all, and then they said we could come on out’.

Most of the service users (the men and their partners) reported that they received information about the SYFP project through the promotional activities of the FEWs and the leaflets advertising the service in the prisons. Only one of the men interviewed in Prison A felt that the service could be advertised more extensively: ‘Before, like I did know nothing about the Family Day visits, and like I’ve seen the Pact woman then on the wing and then I ask her where she was from and then that’s when like I started going in for the family days and all that. But, like I think they need to come on the wings more I think, like we don’t see enough of them, I don’t think’. This was one of the few exceptions where the men suggested that further advertisement and more FEWs were required on the wings.

A prison officer interviewed in Prison A also reported that more extensive marketing was needed to showcase Pact’s vital work with prisoners and their families, and generate even more referrals from Prison Officers and other sources: ‘What I don’t think they do very well is market and advertise the service very well, in my opinion. Pact actually do the work, they do phenomenal work, get it out there, get it out there, I think so’ (PO1).

It is however worth noting that all the other four prison staff interviewed in the two prisons stated that the service was well advertised. One of the prison officers in Prison B said ‘It’s advertised. They [FEWS] do these little flyers and we put up family day on the 12<sup>th</sup> May or 16<sup>th</sup> June, then they apply and then they will start submitting applications there. With [FEW], she goes through the protocol and if they accept it, then they will get on’.

In sum, the prison staff interviewed felt, as the prisoners and their families did, that the service was well advertised through leaflets, flyers, and FEWS' presence on the wings, including the induction wing). They confirmed that there was sufficient information available, and the FEWS were often present in the wings promoting the service.

As part of the effort to broaden access to the project, some of the project's services are made available to men who are not parents but have family members with whom they wish to maintain ties and relationships. One of the men in Prison A did state that he did not have children but was nevertheless benefiting from SYFP's visitation services because he wished to maintain contact with other relatives, namely his mother, sister, nieces and nephews: 'I haven't got kids yet but what it is, I see my niece and my nephews in here and honestly, I didn't know that like I could do that until like I'd seen a Pact down on the wing and then I ask them about it and then I went on the Family Day the other day, so (SU17 Prison A). This prisoner also talked about the positive impact of SYFP visits on his relationship with his sister, revealing that the opportunity to see his sister on Family Day visits rather than normal prison visits had strengthened the bonds between them. This is primarily because the Family Day visit is an extra visit he reserves for his sister and her children, whilst his mother takes advantage of the normal prison visits to which he is also entitled: '[my sister and I] just like a bit more closer. Do you know what I mean? Like before I wouldn't really ring her up all the time and all that and now, like I do. I think it's just like, on a family day we spend like more time together, like when as a normal visit like my mum comes in as well, whereas with my sister come in it was like, I don't know, we kind of like became closer that's all'.

In Prison C, one of the men similarly talked about to the utility of extending the service to men who did not have children but who nevertheless wished to maintain ties with other family members. His involvement in the project gave him the opportunity to strengthen his relationship with family members and this in turn improved his self-perception: 'Just to have the family network and make it stronger, really. It's made me a better person. It's made me a better person obviously, giving more time to my family. Well, I would say engaging better with my family because we are a tight-knit family but, yeah, just making me a positive person around my nieces and my nephews' SU18 (Prison C). By broadening access to its services, the project helps men who do not have children or who do not have access to their children, maintain valuable ties with other family members.

### **7.3 Joining the project**

Having established how service users find out about, and access the project, the study also examined the processes of joining the project. In the three prisons, service users may access the project through self-referral whereby they complete an application form. In addition, prison officers sometimes identify relevant prisoners and refer them to the service. Indeed, prison officers are an important source of referrals, indicating that some of the officers are supportive of the service and aware of its positive impact. In the course of their work with the men they identify potentially eligible service users (parents in prison) and refer them to FEWS who then

follow up the men by assessing their needs, contacting their partner with their permission, and devising individualized casework plans so the men and their families can access relevant support.

### **Joining the SYFP project**

One of the FEWs interviewed in Prison A describes the process of joining the service:  
 The men in the prison, they will put in an app [application] to see PACT, or they can speak to officers on the wing, and then we work quite closely with the officers, they'll ring us up if there's someone they feel we should go and see. There's the POs [Prison Officers] who they'll give apps to family members through, they can either ring, there's the PACT helpline and then they'll put that through to us. Or through visits, they can get **apps** from the tea bar, or speak to the tea bar, and we get referrals from there.

In sum, the evaluation found that most service users were given ample information about the service and were aware of the provision available. The process of broadening access was vital for ensuring that the service could achieve one of its key outcomes which was to 'reduce the social isolation of young parents in prison by helping them engage with their families from prison and directing them to relevant services'.

#### **7.4 How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?**

We have seen how service users gain access to the service. I now turn to an assessment of how the service achieves one of its key aims which is to reduce the social isolation of the men in prison by improving the quality and extent of their contact or ties with family members. The indicators of success relevant to this outcome are: increased frequency of contact to strengthen family relationships.

##### *7.4.1 Increasing the frequency of contact*

Although the FEWs defined the special visits as interventions that were designed to enhance parenting skills and bonds between Father and child, another aim of the bespoke SYFP visits was to improve the frequency of contact between the men and their families.

The men in prison stated that their involvement with the SYFP project gave them access to more frequent contact/visits and the opportunity to bond with their children. As one of the men noted: 'I get a lot of support really, I always do the family days, I always do the baby groups. I get to come on here and get to bathe my baby, change her it's amazing. Me and my wife planned her before I come in because we got married and decided to have another baby and then they took me away two weeks before she was born' (SU11 Prison A). The extra visits enabled the men to form close bonds with their partner and child/ren: 'It [access to the visits] has increased the relationship with my partner. It gives me more of an opportunity to keep in contact with her and my little girl as well. So, it's always a positive type of thing – it's just more time – the time helps. I can get a better bond with my girlfriend and my daughter. Obviously, she's still young [5 months] but it's still nice to see her'. (SU4 Prison A)

The SYFP project caters mainly for young parents aged up to 25 years. Therefore, most of the children affected are infants. Each child would require regular contact with their father to recognize and bond with him. All the men who participated in the SYFP visits were of the view that the visits had certainly ensured that their infant children could grow up to recognize them not only facially but also vocally.

### **Impact of more Frequent SYFP Visits**

SU15 was interviewed in Prison A. He was serving a long prions sentence (12 years – with a possible reduction at the half way point). His daughter was born whilst he was in prison but she started visiting (with the mother) when she was a few days old. She was 18 months old at the time of the interview. Without the intervention of the SYFP project, he would have missed out on the vital stages of his child’s early development and would have been unable to bond with her during those phases. He describes how, despite the child’s age, she now recognises him largely due to the continued interaction he has had with her in more conducive settings since her birth:

I was on the phone to her [my daughter], not yesterday, the day before because the phone calls are limited like to 10 minutes and I was on the phone to her and the whole like 8 minutes of them 10 minutes, I’m talking to my daughter, I’m not even talking, she went dada! (mimics baby talk) like she’s trying to tell me a story. She’s trying to tell me things but it’s like (mimics baby talk) and I’m like, yeah, yeah, have you been a good girl? (mimics baby talk) You know what I mean and the two minutes I had with my partner, she’s like “oh my god, I think she’s missing you” because I haven’t seen her [my daughter] for about a week now, it’s going to be two weeks, I think I’ll have a visit on Saturday next, so it’s been two weeks since I’ve seen her last. SU15 (Prison A)

Without exception, the parents in prison explained that the visits organized by the SYFP project such as baby groups and family days were, compared to normal visits in prison, more conducive for good quality interactions with their families. They enabled the families to interact freely within in a family-friendly visitors’ room. In Prison A, the room is decorated in bright colors with ample space for children to run around and engage with their fathers. Prison B also has a suitably decorated room with sofas and colorful decorations. There are toys available in the room for the visiting children. There are also entertaining activities that usefully engage the children and reduce the negativity that typically characterizes the prison environment. The researcher did not visit Prison C but interviews with the men revealed that the visit areas were similarly family-friendly and conducive for good quality interactions unlike the setting of normal prison visits. The men evaluated the SYFP visits positively: ‘Buffet, animals come in for the kids, face paints, drawings, activities you... no bibs, like you can just walk around with your baby in your hand, it’s a lot better, it’s good. ....SU19’.

It follows that SYFP visits increase the frequency of visits and enhances the quality of interactions between the men and their children. In doing so, it strengthens bonds between both

parties. Although some of the children are infants aged under 12 months and are as such unable to communicate meaningfully with their father, over time, and after attending several baby groups, some of the children begin to recognise their father during the visits. They also recognise their father's voice over the telephone and attempt to communicate with him. This is also the case for some of the children who were born whilst their father was in prison or were only a few weeks old when their father went to prison. The frequent visits ensure that as time goes on, they can begin to recognise their father.

In the [normal prison] visit, she [my daughter] does cry because I can't really do nothing with her, yeah. Oh, it is... it has been really bad for me. And especially for the baby as well, because in the mornings, she's usually calling for me, and my partner tells me, do you know what I mean, it's not nice to hear that. But I don't really like her coming here, but for her to keep that bond with me, she's got to see me, do you know what I mean? (SU10 Prison A)

The prisoners' partners also reflected on the key benefits of SYFP visits. Interviews with them revealed that observing the interaction between father and child was emotionally beneficial for the mother; it reassured the mother that the child was being given the opportunity to bond with his or her father. A prisoner's partner who said she visited her partner with their son primarily to give them the chance to bond with each other described her experience of SYFP visits: 'it just makes me happy like watching him with him, you know? Overall, it does make me happy' (FM6 Prison A).

Other parents in the community reinforced this. For example, FM1, was certain that the increased level of contact in the more conducive setting of SYFP visits, had a positive impact on her child's relationship with her father. She stated that although her child was only 5 months old, she was already starting to recognise her father and was beginning to form a bond with him: 'It [baby group] is a lot better because I think if the baby was only to see him once a week, it's not that much anyway and so I think she is starting to recognise him and her dad which is good. Even though she's only 5 months, I think she does recognise [him]. I mean she spends all of her time with me. When I first started taking her in with me she was quite wary; she was straight away looking for me when she goes with my partner or anyone else at home. She's fine now - I take her in, she's absolutely fine with [him]\*. She doesn't worry about where I am or anything. I live alone with my mum, my dad passed away a few years ago. So the only man she sees is [father in prison] \*. So, I think because it's the only male that she is seeing, I think she recognises him as her dad. Pact has helped definitely, because [father and daughter] they can do a lot more. He's allowed to change her nappy on the baby group, he can play with her stuff like that'.

Other parents also indicated that the regular contact and interactive visits facilitated by SYFP, improved the children's ability to recognise their father in person and react positively to his voice over the phone. Here, a prisoner's partner, FM7, describes her child's reaction to her father when he telephones from prison: 'Obviously, yeah, he is obviously in the prison and, yeah, we have like daily contact which is good, especially with [our daughter] because she

hears his voice everyday. her face lights up when he comes on the phone she'd start babbling and talks to her dad'.

The men's partners believed that it was the more conducive and interactive environment of SYFP visits that made all the difference. They were quite unlike the normal visits offered by the prison typically in very restrictive settings where the men were not permitted to move away from their seat and interact properly with their child/ren:

...its for the baby and him [the father in prison] to bond more every week which is good. He got arrested just before his birth on the same day as well... from the hospital so he hasn't like had a chance to bond. But with this extra visit it's like.... He sees him like three times a week. So, it is good.... It's lovely, yeah. It's so much calmer than a normal visit. ..It's not as noisy. You get to sit in the comfy area. He's allowed to play with toys which on a normal visit we've got to stay still and he's not allowed to play with no toys. So, he does get...he does go quite you know, fed up. FM6

Another prisoner's partner said that the SYFP visits provides bonding opportunities for her partner in prison and their daughter: 'obviously she's only 18 months. So, for her, with her age, I think that's very beneficial for her because she's getting the opportunity to like walk around with her dad and like getting to like experience things together. FM7. This prisoner's partner also noticed that her partner was investing more effort in forming a close bond with their daughter. She reported that the prisoner 'talks more and he makes more of an effort with her [their daughter].'

#### 7.4.2 Strengthening relationships

The more frequent visits also strengthen the men's relationship with their partner. The increased frequency of contact means that they can see each other more often and it helps to sustain relationships. Remarking on the positive impact of the more frequent visits on relationships, one of the men in prison said: 'It's increased really, the relationship with my partner. As in obviously because I'm in here, it's given me more of an opportunity to always be in contact'. He noted that the inevitable separation created by imprisonment posed challenges for his relationship with his partner, but explained that the more frequent SYFP visits helped to reduce the sense of separation and strengthened: 'every relationship has its patches and what not, but overall it was okay but once in here, it's a bit more challenging I guess, not only for me but for her [my partner] but I think through PACT and stuff, I see it growing bit stronger, having the opportunity for her to come up a bit more and to see me, et cetera' (SU4 Prison A).

Most of the men interviewed in all three prisons drew attention to the indispensability of the SYFP project and were certain that without the service, there would be infrequent family visits which would inevitably destroy relationships, as this man in Prison B observed: 'I think if I only...if it was like one visit a week and stuff, I think it'd put a bit of a strain on it [my relationship with my partner]. And I think by seeing her three times a week is you know, we're so close, you know what I mean? If I didn't see her much I think you know, we'll start drifting



apart a little bit to be honest (SU10). The men in Prison C echoed these views and emphasised that the extra SYFP visits strengthened family relationships: ‘It brought us [my partner and I] closer maybe. Seeing each other and being able to have that extra hour in a week which is an hour ago like, totally’ (SU20 Prison C).

In Prison C, another prisoner reported that when he moved from a prison with an SYFP project in place to one that did not have the service, the inability to interact closely with his partner and child in the more restrictive setting of the normal prison visit put a strain on his relationship with his partner; it created a distance between them, which eventually led to their separation:

Obviously if it wasn’t for Pact, the first year [of his child’s life] would have been hard cos me and my partner were together at the time cos obviously, we was having better visits at the time we could sort of like lie on the floor with my son and playing games and there was a more relaxed atmosphere and then when I left that prison and went to another prison it sort of it got in the way of my relationship with my ex-partner as well. So, it became more distant and over time we ended up breaking up ... the distance, the visits were shorter ...like 45 minutes compared to two hours. So, [the previous prison with the Pact service] sort of kept everything together. They acted like a glue really; keeping families together’ (SU25).

#### *7.4.3 Providing a family-friendly alternative to normal prison visits*

Similar to the men in prison, the parents in the community (the men’s partners) were critical of the normal/ordinary prison visit. They viewed them as impractical and not child-friendly. They also felt that the visit was restrictive with limited opportunity for the men to interact with, and bond with their children. Some were so affected by the unpleasantness of the visits that they decided to avoid the visits altogether. Here, a prisoner partner mentions the better quality visits provided by the SYFP project in Prison A and describes her experiences of the normal prison visit:

It [Baby Group] was much better. To be honest, I’m not going to come on normal visit anymore, I’m going to just come to the baby ones because... It’s much better because on the normal ones, we’re sat across each other and it’s not practical for a 4-month-old. And it’s nice in the baby group because it’s more hands-on for his dad’s to, obviously, bonds with him better. Like, it’s only little things like changing a nappy and stuff like that, but it’s much better for him. And he can like get on the floor with him, play with him with all the toys that they provide. And just, I think, it’s personally much better and if it weren’t for baby group I don’t think I’d be coming to [inaudible 00:01:38] at all, so. (FM4)

This demonstrates the normal prison visits can be so unpleasant that it discourages some family members from visiting the prison. Some of the prisoners’ partners reported that unlike the visits provided by the SYFP project, during normal/ordinary prison visits where the men were not permitted to leave their seats, both parties were compelled to focus on each other with limited attention paid to the child. This was particularly disconcerting for both parties where they were

no longer in a relationship and the purpose of the visit was primarily to foster contact and ties between the child and the parent in prison. By contrast the SYFP visits facilitated greater engagement and interaction with the child as this prisoner's partner noted: 'I'd say like with baby group, it was much better because we was able to just concentrate on one thing and that was the baby. Whereas obviously, when we just sat across each other on a normal visit, we just would concentrate more in each other than the baby because we're not, obviously, like engaging with him as much because it's hard to sit across from each other like that, so' FM4

In contrast to normal prison visits, the visits organised by the FEWS were evaluated very positively by all the men and family members who had accessed the visits. They all commented on the more pleasant and less restrictive visiting conditions. Indeed, in some cases, the setting of the visits meant that the men and their partners could communicate with each other more positively than they had done in the past, not least because both parties were able to communicate, interact, and bond with each other in a family-friendly setting. SYFP's visits were thus vital for ensuring continued contact and sustaining relationships.

Echoing the views of the men and their partners, the FEWS described the setting of SYFP visits as quite different from the restrictive conditions of the prison environment and conducive for interactions between the men and their families.. Here, a FEW describes the quality of the visits: 'We put on activities so dad can interact with the children. They interact more like with other families and I always remember I've heard this comment a few times, for the first time after that family day and I went onto the wings and one of the guys said, I almost forgot I was in prison for a while'. FEW1

All the staff members interviewed (FEWs and Prison Staff) also alluded to the role of the SYFP project in increasing the frequency of contact between the men and their families and improving the quality of relationships. For example, just as the men and their families opined, a probation officer noted that the more frequent special visits facilitated regular family interaction and observed that Baby Group visits were useful for creating lasting bonds between the men and their infant children, unlike the normal prison visit:

Its (baby group is) for under a year. They [the men in prison] come in with the baby and they can bathe them, change their nappy, feed them, that sort of thing. The sort of things that they wouldn't be able to do on a normal visit. I once went to a family day, which was very noisy and very messy, but great fun. You can see the kids were just having such a great time. And I think it made it so much more informal than ordinary visits where they're very limited. The prisoner has to sit here and then, the visitor opposite. They're not really allowed to touch. PO4

By giving the fathers in prison access to extra visits to supplement the normal prison visits available to the men<sup>8</sup>, the SYFP project meets one of its key aims which is to help parents in prison maintain frequent contact with their families. It also helps them maintain ties and

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<sup>8</sup> Prisoners' eligibility to normal prison visits vary according to their status in prison. Those with 'enhanced' status achieve their position because of good behaviour and are entitled to six visits a month.

relationships. The parents in prison who received support from the SYFP project valued the visits. Indeed, all the men (apart from 3) reserved SYFP visits, and indeed most of the normal/ordinary prison visits for which they were eligible, for their children, rather than their parents, siblings, or friends and colleagues. One of the men remarked that: ‘I don’t usually waste any of my visits, I just try and see my little boy in a visit, I can’t, because I can only see him six times a month. But sometimes one of my family members will like to come on a visit as well or one of my girlfriend’s family members’ (SU7 Prison A).

**Some comments about the quality of normal/ordinary prison visits compared with bespoke visits organised by FEW for parents in prison and their families**

The visits organized by The FEWS are quite unlike normal prison visits where the furnishings and regulations are such that the prisoners’ movements and levels of physical interaction with their families are severely limited. The men interviewed said the normal prison visits were ‘very crowded, full of people’ and ‘hectic’, indicating that the visits were chaotic and fundamentally unsuitable for young children:

...very crowded, full of people, whereas with the Pact you haven’t got a lot of people in there so you can spend time with the baby, do you know what I mean? Whereas on a normal visit without Pact it’s just hectic and full of people and another thing you can change the baby’s nappy and bond with the baby but on a normal visit you can’t do that so it’s a big help to be honest. SU2 (Prison A)

The prison officers similarly described SYFP visits as more pleasant and child-friendly, unlike the normal prison visit which was typically more crowded, restrictive, and intimidating for families. Here, a prison officer describes a normal prison visit: ‘There’s a lot of visitors like, they get about 17 other families, so it’s like, right okay, some of the kids can come round, you can put them on your lap, but it’s not as relaxed because, you know, they get very bad language and they won’t feel comfy with the children, but it’s different altogether with Pact... they [the children] can see it’s not as scary as they thought and they relax and the parents, they relax and everyone relaxes. The Baby Group is separate, you know? It’s a quiet place away from other prisoners So, was a really nice room as well, they used’ (PO3 Prison B)

Some of the prisoners’ families find normal visits distressing for several reasons. Those with children are compelled to restrict the children’s movement and this can prove quite difficult when the children are very young and unable to comprehend prison rules. Distressed parents sometimes find themselves having to restrain very young children who naturally find it difficult to remain still for a protracted period, and in the process, the parents waste precious visiting time. Furthermore, prisoners are reproached by prison guards if they do not remain seated. Indeed, the men’s family members (including their children) may be reprimanded if they do not remain confined to their allotted space. These visiting conditions discourage further visits and are inimical to the effort to maintain family ties. Below, a father in Prison B describes the quality of normal visits compared with the Baby Group facilitated by the FEWS:

To be honest, the prison is useless, you know. They don't like you doing things that you're moving on a visit really. You can't even cuddle your partner you know, really. You can do it when you first go in. But if you're doing it kind of like through the visit and stuff, they tell you to sit back and stuff like that. There's many people around. And if their kids are running wild in the visit hall, they're shouting at them and they're shouting at the parents telling them to keep control of them and stuff, you know. Kids are going to run wild, don't they, you know? So that's why it's good in family days because they can just be themselves and enjoy themselves then they enjoy coming to see you. SU11 (Prison B)

The semi-structured interviews revealed that normal prison visits can be distressing to the families of prisoners. Below, this prisoner also remarked that the conditions of normal prison visits discouraged his partner from visiting him:

She [my partner] would rather the Pact visits more than any other visits because normal visits are not very good any other day. You've got to sit down, you're not allowed to move out the seat. At least with the family days and the baby groups and stuff you can get up and you can play with the kids and stuff like that, run around with them, you know. It's amazing really. SU11 (Prison B).

The men in Prison A echoed this view:

Obviously, I don't know about others like, like with me and my partner, obviously, she was like obviously stressed like before the family day visit, she was stressed obviously coming here and dragging her feet because we're not allowed to get off the chair like, we've got to sit down and the baby's ran off and then I can't go and pick her up but then obviously, my Mrs was like really, really frustrated and really, really stressed over that, right. (SU15 Prison A)

Normal prison visits can also adversely affect relationships between parent and child. This is particularly the case where the child is very young and unable to understand why the parent in prison cannot engage or interact with him or her. Where the parent and child previously shared a strong bond, the child might interpret the parent's immobility as withdrawal of affection and this is likely to be distressing to the child:

Obviously in May, you know what I mean, there's no Family Day and the last few visits I've had like, you know, sat on a chair, can't get up. And they [Prison Staff] all say, you, sit down, you know, because you're tempted to get up and grab your daughter because she's running off, she wants daddy to chase her and she thinks, yeah, she's a child, she's probably thinking why daddy ain't chasing me, why ain't daddy playing with me? She's a baby, she could be thinking maybe daddy don't like me, maybe daddy don't... I don't know' (SU15 Prison A)

The restrictive and less interactive setting in which normal prison visits are held can also adversely affect the emotional wellbeing of the men and their families. The prisoner below attests to this:

I mean, because usually when I see her [my daughter] at [normal prison] visits, I don't play with her, and when it's time for me to go, she cries. But here, because I'm playing with her, she has that time with me and then she says bye and stuff like that

which is good, yeah. Usually when I have a normal visit, I feel all depressed my daughter will be crying, upsets me but when I am here [Pact's family day], I leave happier (SU10 Prison B).

Some of the parents in the community also drew attention to the negative impact of the visits on the child/ren, reinforcing the men's observations about the distress such visits caused family members: 'I found it [the normal prison visit] hard because [our son's] a lot more hyper now so when we've just got to sit there for [our son] to interact with him, I do find that really hard because he can't... Because he's so wild, he just wants to run everywhere then I got to chase him around and I just think I come on the visit for [the prisoner] to interact with him. I interact with him all day everyday but I come on a visit for [the prisoner] to have some time with him FM5

#### *7.4.4 Evoking a sense of normality in an abnormal setting*

The SYFP visits evoked such a strong sense of normality that this prisoner's (SU13) partner was overwhelmed with emotion during a Baby Group visit. This is largely because her experience of a normal prison visit had been so negative that it was such a relief to experience a more family-friendly and pleasant visit:

When this Family Day come, she [my partner] was like over the moon, she was so happy. It changed her whole behaviour as well as mine, as well as my daughter's, she was like wow it don't feel like in a way, you know, I can get up with my partner and walk around with the baby and stuff obviously and, you know, take her through the animals and things like that, face paint, I'll draw and she'll sit on my lap, walk around freely, you know what I mean? And my missus said to me, she's like wow, she goes, it feels like I'm in a play centre with you, it feels like normal and like then she had a few tears here and there like because it just... like she sat back and just looking at me playing with my daughter and she was like I can see her watering up. And I said smile and she's like and she just went like... I said come here, I said, you know, don't worry SU13 (Prison A).

One of the men in Prison A described the impact of the more frequent and pleasant visits on his relationship with his family and his description echoed the views of the other men who were interviewed: 'Like I said, this getting up thing and all that, it don't feel like you're in a prison environment and that's a big thing for like our families ...in a way, that family visit made me and my partner even more closer. Our bond got better. (SU13). Echoing this, all the men in prison who had attended the visits organized by the FEWS, reported that the visits evoked a sense of normality. In his description of the Family Day visit, one of the men in Prison A noted that it is: 'Absolutely amazing like you know, the activities they had going like that little animals and things like that. Before the visit we had to design the like a plant pot and things like that for them, to hand out to the children like the food and stuff, ... it's like it don't feel like you're in prison' (SU15 Prison A). Another prisoner in Prison A felt the same way: 'We just get to do things, I mean, all the activities they put together you know, whether it's the drawings or the cakes and stuff like that. It's a lot better than a normal visit. ...That

environment that Pact sets up is great because it's like, it don't feel like prison for that two hours you're in there. It don't feel like prison SU6'.

In Prison B, the men's views about SYFP visits were similar; they evaluated the visits positively. They appreciated the opportunity to bond with their infant children in a more natural setting that was less restrictive than the normal prison environment: 'She's [my daughter is] 18 months now, I've been here 18 months. Yeah, that's right. So, I got to serve six years instead of twelve. So, you know, if it weren't for this I would never have had anything to be honest. I got to bath her, I've got to change her, it's brilliant. ...I always do the baby groups. You know, I get to come on here and I get to bath my baby, change her, it's amazing really, I love it you know. ... it's like really private, so like a private little visit. You get to bond better with them [family members] and stuff like that. (SU10). These experiences show that the men appreciated the visits facilitated by The FEWS and felt that (unlike normal/ordinary prison visits) the SYFP visits helped them interact and bond with their children.

The prisoners' partners equally alluded to the sense of normality evoked by the family-friendly atmosphere of SYFP visits. Here, one describes her experience of the visits: 'It kind of felt that it was a day out really because obviously, you know, for a bit it felt like he wasn't in prison for that brief time really. It's really nice. It was very beneficial. Especially to my daughter, I think she's having an amazing time' (FM7). This prisoner's partner also said: 'It's obviously quite restricted on a normal visit ...For those two hours [during baby group], yeah, it felt like we're just two parents who's taken our child out really' (FM7).

One of the prison officers reinforced this: 'from what I've seen, they [SYFP visits] keep the family ties ... they [the men in prison] keep saying it's totally different on this, it's better than the normal environment in the house, you know? Like Christmas time, is it last year, year before? What we did, they will do the Christmas family visit, you know, try to do a traditional Christmas near a fireplace, a proper fireplace and the lights in and there's glowing Christmas trees and they all stand near the fire and I think they can imagine a traditional Christmas and it was fantastic' (PO3 Prison B). This Prison Officer felt that the less restrictive SYFP visits made a symbolic difference; they removed the invisible barrier imposed during normal prison visits. The invisible barrier prevents the men from interacting naturally with their families in the more relaxed manner family members would normally interact with each other: 'The restraints, they got restraints placed on them [during the normal prison visit], but when they got the Pact taking over, those restraints have been *loosening slightly* and they *relax* more. It's strange, isn't it? A *totally different atmosphere*.'

Unlike the semblance of normality associated with SYFP visits, ordinary prison visits replicate the restrictions and intimidation associated with imprisonment. The visits also reinforce the labelling and stigma attached to prisoners. They are compelled to wear a bib during the visits which labels them as prisoners and can attract potentially humiliating questions from their children: 'On a normal visit you've got to wear a bib everywhere, so where we don't have to wear a bib [in Pact's Baby Group and Family Day visits], it's sort of like my daughter don't ask me questions about that sort of thing, you know? (SU6 Prison A)

It is however worth noting that some prisoners do not wish to have any contact with their children whilst they are in prison. They decline the opportunity to have their children visit them. Two reasons can be offered for this. First, they are reluctant to expose their children to the unpleasantness of the prison regime and environment: 'I don't want my four-year-old to come in. Because it's just...it's not nice for him, is it? I told him I was working away. . I don't want him to get searched and stuff like he's forced or do you what I mean? SU9 (Prison A).

The second reason why some of the men are reluctant to permit visits from their children is that they wish to reduce the stigma attached to imprisonment. The men believe that if they inform their children that they are in prison, their children would inform others in the community and unwittingly expose themselves to stigmatisation. As such, the men conceal their current situation to protect their children from stigmatisation. For example, one of the men in Prison C, SU20, concealed his imprisonment by telling his children that he was away from home because he was working: 'She [my 4-year-old daughter] thinks I'm working at the moment, so we've kept it like that, it's the best way, so. I will try not to, to tell them I'm in prison and it's just a good idea, I know it's like something you want your kids to... where daddy is, you know, they talk a lot and the one, she's in school and she go on and say, my daddy's here and we [inaudible 00:09:17]. I just keep it as work and work as hard as I can, as fast as I can and I'd be home soon, that's how I keep it'.

Some of the men who allowed their children to visit them expressed similar fears but the pleasantness of SYFP visits assuaged their fears: 'I was pretty scared about having her [my daughter] in on a normal visit just because of the way it was put together. But them ones [Pact's visits] I mean like I look forward to seeing her now all the time like in the sense of you know, she's gonna feel comfortable, I am gonna feel comfortable' SU6 (Prison A).

The prisoner's partners felt the same: 'she's [my daughter's] actually fine at the prison itself. So, it feels like, for her, actually, she's just going to see her dad and that is not a scary place that you think it would be. ...obviously in the beginning before I went, I was very worried about taking her in because obviously I never wanted her to go into a prison. But after going there for the first time actually it's not as bad as I thought it was going to be (FM7).

## 7.5 How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?

The special visits improve the men's wellbeing and in turn, reduces the incidence of offending that arises from the emotional distress associated with lack of contact. Indeed, there is substantial evidence that family relationships can enhance the emotional wellbeing of prisoners, improve their behaviour, and contribute to order maintenance in prison. An official report produced by the Ministry of Justice identified family relationship as a key factor that reduces the risk of suicide in prison (see for example, MOJ 2013).

The men who receiving support from the SYFP project described the distressful impact of separation from family members. For example, SU4 (in Prison A) said that he found the experience: 'quite depressing and stressful really cos you know you got a baby and a missus out there and you don't get to see them, so it is a bit stressful. According to another prisoner, SU6, in Prison A: 'Prison B I was in first for a month, and then I was just a bit down about the situation and then the second month here [in Prison A] I was a bit down. And then when I noticed that Pact was still working with the prison, I know how useful they are and I've made myself feel much better'. One of the men was so overcome by the emotional distress of being separated from his new born son that he wept during the interview. The researcher had to notify a FEW who undertook to work with the man to help him through the emotional distress.

### 7.5.1 Enhancing emotional wellbeing

The men did say that the frequent contact facilitated by the SYFP project enhanced their emotional wellbeing because it instilled a sense of hope that they could have a future with their partner and child/ren. The more frequent contact provided by the SYFP project impacted positively on the prisoners' overall wellbeing largely because it served as a respite from the adverse experience of imprisonment. It reduced the sense of separation and isolation. It also made the experience bearable in the sense that it gave the men something to look forward to. This was the view of most of the men. As one (in Prison A) put it: 'It is really good because once you're *closed off* from things I found that not just myself but other people get frustrated more. But once there's an opportunity obviously to talk to people like family and friends and definitely your partner and your children, it makes it a lot more easier for you to deal with and cope a bit more with what's going on in your new type of environment. I think it has really helped just to know that I get to see my daughter and I get to see my partner it just gives you more to look forward to'.

Visits did however, create mixed emotions in some of the men. There was a feeling of sadness at the end each visit when the families had to leave but the anticipation of another visit did tend to raise the men's spirits and improve their emotional wellbeing. One of the men in Prison B put it this way: 'When I go back the wings, when I leave it's horrible, you know. But I just look forward to the next one then. It's just you know, when I go back the wing it's honestly, it's rubbish and you've got to leave them and then she [my daughter] cries to me sometimes when I leave, so you know it's hard, it is. Yeah' (SU 10).



All the men felt that the frequent and better quality SYFP visits impacted positively on their emotional wellbeing. SU11 (in Prison A) stated: ‘I obviously see my family more and I’m happy on myself for that’. Another man in Prison A made it clear that: ‘Two hours with your family just having to feel normal for them two hours, not feeling like you’re in a prison, is just like it can change the whole mood. I’ll be honest with you, the way I felt when I left the family day visit that day, wow! I have a big smile on my face, head up high, smiling, like not even stressed, you know what I mean? I felt happy. Obviously because if I know that I’ve just seen my family and all, they’re happy and I’m happy, I’m getting along with everyone [in prison] (SU15).

This suggests that the visits improved the men’s wellbeing with positive implications for their conduct in prison. Added to the role of the project in enhancing the men’s emotional wellbeing, the men’s partners reported that the ability to maintain contact and a good relationship with their partner was important in terms of their wellbeing; it helped ameliorate the emotional distress of separation: ‘It is upsetting. It’s horrible. when you have your down days you look forward to your visit then, don’t you ...? FM6. All the prisoners’ partners interviewed echoed this view. Another example is provided here: ‘It’s obviously been really, really hard because he’s gone to prison and it’s been a massive impact being on my own, you know? I think that those Family Days, they’re really beneficial’ FM7

The above descriptions encapsulate the views of the participating prisoners and their families. The comments indicate that, added to the more conducive settings in which the SYFP visits were held, the visits improved the quality of family relationships, and the emotional wellbeing of service users.

### 7.5.2 Improving behaviour

Most of the men stated that their effort to maintain good relationships or repair broken relationships with family members motivated them to undertake the courses offered by the FEWS. The participated in the courses to be improve their behaviour and relationships with their families. In the three prisons, the men who engaged with the SYFP project and undertook the courses on offer were hopeful that their families would interpret their actions as evidence of their strong motivation to change. The men avoided negative behaviour they felt would affect their eligibility for the service<sup>9</sup>. Here, a prisoner in Prison B explains why he went on a parenting course: ‘I wouldn’t want to misbehave to lose it. I do all this, behaving and doing this course and stuff for my family. You know, I want to prove to them [my family] that you know, I’m better than what I am’. SU10 (Prison B). Another prisoner in Prison A indicated that he undertook parenting and relationship courses to repair broken relationships and improve his parenting abilities: ‘I went on the parenting course obviously because at that time my son was on the [social services] register, so I went on that. I’d done the relationship course obviously because of the issue with me and my ex-partner obviously to try and better the relationship. So, I’ve done all of them obviously due to the fact that obviously trying to do the better for my son

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the SYFP project is available to all parents in prison. Any limits to eligibility stem from prison rules; those labelled as security risks are excluded from the service.

and you know, the family' (SU8). In Prison C, the men were similarly motivated to change. One of the men remarked that: It's [SYFP's intervention] definitely made me like see sense of life, sorted my behaviour and like making sure that I can't afford to end up in jail at the moment. I've got to get home first for the baby as well. It's all about him' (SU20).

These comments suggest that the support offered by the SYFP project, particularly the good quality visits, produces a positive impact; it motivates some of the men to engage in positive activities, pursue several means of self-improvement, and avoid behaviour that would jeopardize their relationship with significant people in their lives. In doing so, the service promotes desistance. Some sections of the desistance literature emphasize that developing and maintaining positive bonds with significant others is a key step towards secondary (or permanent) desistance (Farrall et al. 2014).

The FEWS also explained how the service impacts on the men's behaviour. Echoing the themes that emerged from interviews with the men, the FEWS stated that the visits provided by the service improve the men's behaviour because the prospect or anticipation of a family visit enhances the men's emotional wellbeing. In addition, the ability to maintain family relationships sustains the men's hope in a positive future with their family. This can improve the men's mental wellbeing and behaviour. Below a FEW describes the impact of SYFP visits:

I think it's because it gives them hope, if they thought that there's no chance they can have contact with their children and they engage with PACT, and we tell them that we can contact social services and then they have a meeting, I think it can just improve their hope, which obviously then improves behaviour. I've heard of cases where there's been, their mental health's been very closely related to whether or not they're having contact with their children. So, if we can assist with that, it's only going to improve their mental health. I think having contact with your family improves wellbeing in general (FEW 2)

Indeed, there is a consensus amongst the FEWs that the support they offer through the Supporting Young Fathers in Prison project, particularly the extra visits (baby group and family day), exerts a positive influence on the prisoners' behaviour. It encourages the prisoners to avoid behaviour that can damage their chances of maintaining contact with their family. Below, a FEW describes the impact on behaviour:

I think its massively important for them to have those ties and to know that they've got that support and the things that Pact do really nurture that and I think it's really important to the service user and their families for that to be in place. And also with family day and baby group, they know that they have pass like security checks and things and so part of that would be like good behaviour. That doesn't come from Pact, we are not of the mind-set that they have to be well behaved to have these it's not a privilege, it is their right to have these, but from the prison point of view, they'd have to pass security checks and part of that is like good behaviour so I think it does encourage them. (FEW1)

By facilitating more frequent contact between the men and their families, the SYFP project also support the men's efforts to retain a handle on reality which is often beclouded by the chaotic nature of prison life. 'it gives them a bit of normality in a world full of madness' FEW5. The consensus amongst the members of staff interviewed was that the more SYFP contact enabled by SYFP visits improved family relationships and where relevant, helped to salvage broken relationships. and in doing so, instilled in the men some hope that a better future is possible. PO1, a Prison Officer in Prison A went on to state that:

A lot of these guys [the prisoners] have lost hope, they've come into this prison, they've lost everything around them they've burnt bridges with their family members. some of these guys have nothing to live for anymore and I think the work that Pact do is phenomenal because it engages all the people again. It builds those bridges which is so important because these guys got hope. Yes, they've made mistakes several mistakes a lot of them have, but now I am perhaps engaging with my girlfriend, my mother, my children, my children come to see me which is so important. PO1

The interaction with family members through the SYFP project impacted on the men's behaviour in other ways. Access to SYFP visits is linked to the prison service's assessment of the men's behaviour and restricted to men who have a record of good behaviour and have demonstrated through their behaviour, that they are not a 'security risk'. These behavioural requirements motivate the men to avoid misconduct that could see them labelled as security risks, reduce their ascribed status, and in turn, render them ineligible for SYFP visits: 'they're aware that if they are badly behaved, then they might not pass security for family day and baby group. Therefore, although it's not used as a punishment, it's kind of an incentive for good behaviour' (FEW 2)

Members of prison staff also talked about the processes through which the service achieves its aim of helping to improve the men's behaviour and contribute to order in prison. They highlighted the impact of the project on the men's wellbeing and behaviour, echoing the men's belief that the visits provided by the project made the experience of imprisonment bearable. In doing so, the visits contributed to order in prison; they improved the men's behaviour, and made the prison environment calmer and more positive for everyone. As PO3, a Prison Officer observed, in the run up to one of SYFP's visits:

They (the men in prison) are totally different, I mean, and also not just that coming up to it, you can see they're getting more enthusiastic and excited to think about the next few days now and see the kids and in a relaxed environment as opposed to the rigid one, you know'. PO3 also noted that the positive change in the men's mood tended to have an equally positive impact on the general atmosphere in prison: 'Makes it easier for everybody. Everyone gets to be relaxed which is what you want. [There are] no problems, just totally different, relaxed. When they go back [after the visit] they're very different: calm, happy, relaxed, et cetera, you know, regular, good emotions only'.

This indicates that the visits help maintain order in prison. Added to the calming effect of anticipated family visits, the visits contribute to order in prison because they inspire prisoners

to strive for eligibility by engaging in good behaviour. A Prison Officer (PO3) in Prison B explained how this occurred: ‘If you think of it logically, there’s a knock-on effect because the ones who go back to their cells they’ll tell how it was and [others] go well, hang on, if I can do what he has done, I’ll get one. And then the next one gets one and it spreads and if it spreads, everyone’s happier. So definitely a knock-on effect’.

A Prison Officer in Prison A, also pointed out that the visits helped to reduce the sense of hopelessness associated with imprisonment and they also helped prisoners repair broken relationships: ‘A lot of these guys have lost hope, they’ve come into this prison, they’ve lost everything around them they’ve burnt bridges with their family members. some of these guys have nothing to live for anymore and I think the work that Pact do is phenomenal because it engages all the people again. It builds those bridges which is so important because these guys got hope’.

Maintaining adequate contact improves the men’s wellbeing and behaviour, and contributes to order maintenance in prison. It is therefore not surprising that limited or no contact with family members can affect the men’s wellbeing quite significantly. It heightens the men’s anxiety and increases the risk of harmful behaviour including self-harm. A probation officer in Prison B cited the example of a man who had ‘cut himself really badly’ because he could not make contact with his pregnant partner. The probation officer added the following comment: ‘I think if they’re not able to contact them, their behaviour here can be very, very different. And if they’re able to contact them, it reduces their anxiety and then, their behaviour improves a lot. A FEW in Prison A similarly went on to say: ‘if they have, say like low mood, this could be influenced by the fact that they’re not having contact with their children or their family’ FEW2

So far, we have seen that how service users and others describe the project’s efforts to achieve its key aims of reducing the social isolation of the men in prison by improving the quality and extent of their contact or ties with family members and improving their behaviour. We now turn to a consideration of what the service does to achieve another one of its key aims which is to direct the patents in prison and their families to relevant services.

## **7.6 How does the project direct service users to relevant sources of support?**

To answer to this empirical question, the study explored the processes through which the SYFP project provides access to adequate support. Key indicators identified as measures of this outcome were assessing needs, preparing family action plans, providing access to courses and interventions such as Time to Connect, resettlement focused family conferences, community based services, and domestic violence provision. Preparing transfer plans where relevant was an additional indicator. Below the support services identified by the participants are discussed and an assessment is made of the degree to which the SYFP project achieved its aim of providing access to relevant services.

### *7.6.1 Assessing needs and preparing individualised family action plans*

The SYFP project provides personalised interventions. Needs assessments are conducted to design family plans and the plans are put together collaboratively with service users on the basis of the needs of each family. A FEW in Prison A said: ‘I completely believe our services

users have a voice and it's really important that their voice is heard, so they have an input into the family action plan'. In Prison B, the process of individualizing needs assessment and intervention plans is similar. The men and their families are involved in drawing up the plan: 'we talk to the families and try and do a joint approach with them. We do a family action plan which is involving all the family' (FEW2).

### 7.6.2 *Providing access to prison-based courses and groups*

Prison-based parenting and relationship courses are examples of interventions provided. These seek to help the men in prison improve their parenting skills and maintain good relationships with their families during and after imprisonment. Time to Connect is as mentioned earlier, one of the parenting courses delivered. Other interventions which seek to strengthen the child's attachment with the father by enabling virtual or remote contact are also provided. A key resource utilized for this purpose is Storybook Dads. As noted earlier, the resource enables the men to parent from prison by recording stories for their children. The stories are then edited for clarity by the Storybook Dads Project and made available to the child/ren, giving them the opportunity to listen to the stories and hear their father's voice. The FEWS believe that this resource is useful for reducing the adverse impact of separation and loss that accompanies parental imprisonment. It gives the child/ren access to a key childhood experience that is routinely available to other children. As one FEW put it: 'things like Storybook Dads, I think that helps as well because if they read a story to their child and they can listen back to it going to sleep, which is obviously a major part of childhood is having a bedtime story'.

#### **Parenting and relationship courses**

The FEWs described the parenting and relationship courses available to the young parents. Here two FEWs in Prison A sets out the nature and aims of the courses:

We run a parenting class that's a two-day course and it looks at how you can still be a parent whilst you're still in prison. So, the importance of like making the most of every contact, things that you can do to maintain those family ties, and then just like basic parenting skills. So, we do that and also then our relationship course. So that will look at healthy relationships, good communication skills and how to resolve conflict. So yeah, they are the two courses. They are for the service users.

Pact do run a Time to Connect parenting course. So that's more about how to nurture, make the most of your relationship when you're in prison with your children. And then we're about to run this week a a STAR relationship course from Women's Aid. So that's looking at kind of relationships and healthy relationships, domestic violence and consent and things which I think is really needed. Then we also do a Storybook Dads programme which I think is just brilliant. I just recorded one a couple of weeks ago with someone and I saw the family after that and they said it's just their child is listening to it all the time. So that's a really good programme as well. So, we do baby group, STAR relationship, the Time to Connect and then Storybook Dads mainly. we had this ambulance come in and do a session on kind of first aid for babies one week. And the week after, so not this Monday, a week after we have someone coming in from the community to do like a story time and a rhyme time. So, some weeks we have external people in and some weeks we'll maybe do an activity that they're like making a little craft or something that the baby can do with their dads.

The dads do most of it but it's just kind of that interaction. And also, we have a really like we made a little kind of like a photo album but instead of putting photos in, each week, the dads will write a little message. So, it could be like, "We did this together today," or "I really loved seeing you smile," or anything like that. And then we've encouraged the partners because they can't have photos in the prison, to take a photo each week on the outside in the community that they can put in the album and then when the child's grown up, they still get to see that time they had with their dad even if they can't be there like all the time now. So we do that as well and try and kind of encourage that memory building and...yeah. We just kind of talk about things like the importance of them still maintaining a part of their life and things like that.

The men who attended the courses reported that they benefited from them. In the exchange below, one of the participants describes his experience of attending Time to Connect which is one of the courses offered by the project:

I: Have you been on any other of the Pact courses?

SU10: I've been on the Time to Connect. And I've done the baby massage course with them, yeah

I: What's Time to Connect? What does that do?

SU10: It's like same as arts and crafts and you get to build stuff and that, make stuff for the kids and that and then you can hand them out on a family day then. So, it was nice. I made a few different things like the rattles were for like kids and that. I made a lot of like cups and that, colour them in pink and put on stickers over them and I made them for a few of the others really. It was nice, yeah.

Time to Connect seeks to equip the men with parenting skills that they can put to good use during interactions with their children during Baby Group or Family Day visits, and subsequently when they are released from prison. Therefore, the course enables the men to parent effectively from prison and on release. Added to the Time to Connect course which gives the men opportunities to learn skills they can apply during SYFP visits, the FEWs also invite external organisations committed to helping people acquire good parenting skills, to attend the visits and work with the men as they perform practical parenting tasks such as bathing a child, changing nappies, and engaging a child in structured play sessions.

The men interviewed valued these interventions largely because it enabled them to parent from prison and strengthen their bond with their child/ren. Indeed, some of the men had not performed practical 'hands-on' parenting tasks in the past and were as such, acquiring new skills: 'This is obviously my first time being a parent. But it has helped a lot. They teach you things, about how to deal with certain things and stuff' (SU2 Prison A). Another said:

I think the family day made me become a better father really, they are helping me with little things – the little things we do on a family day the little bits of advice here and there.

*Who gives you advice?*

Agencies who come in. For example, next week we have St John's ambulance coming in to do like basic paediatric First Aid. So, we get different agencies coming in to look at things like healthy eating (SU1 Prison A)

### **Special visits: Providing parenting opportunities**

During SYFP visits, the high level of interaction permitted, allows the men in prison to relieve their partners of some of the burdens of parenting. The men assume responsibility for changing nappies, bathing the children and running after them. Several men reported that this is the case and some examples are provided here:

She [my partner] could watch me and she could just relax like because she's looking after the baby all the time and she needed that, where I have to do the running around and I enjoy that because obviously, my daughter she knew oh, you know, daddy? playing with me, I took her to see the animals, it was just an amazing feeling. (SU13 Prison A)

It's like really private, so like a private little visit. You get to bond better with them and stuff like that. You know, you could get up and help your baby on the slide and stuff like that and things that I couldn't do if I was on a normal visit. My wife loves it. She'd rather come to them than any other prison, she would. She doesn't like the visit because the baby just running wild and like she's got to keep running after her, she can't relax. At least when I'm there, I do all the work. I get up and run after her and stuff like that. If you get up and run after the baby on the other visit they tell you off. At least with here you can get up and I can change her and like my wife have cup a tea because they give teas and like tea and biscuits, so yeah SU11 (Prison B)

With the baby groups seeing my little one, family visits they're good to all relax there, they're just better for the kids like when I actually get up and go and do activities, drawings, baking cakes or whatever these days. Making cake stuff, like teacakes when you use all the trimmings and stuff on. (SU19 Prison C)

The men recognised that the interventions were giving them the opportunity to practice good parenting skills, and in doing so, the interventions were enabling them to parent from prison. One remarked that the visits enabled him to 'just do dad things': 'I can play toys with her, I can run about, *just do dad things* with my daughter again, yeah. Oh, it's great! The first group I had, I attended that. We've got a sort of good bond like (SU10 Prison B).

### **SYFP visits as family engagement interventions**

The FEWs in both prisons defined the special visits as entitlements not privileges and outlined the range of resources integrated into the visits to facilitate good quality family interaction and strengthen relationships:

There's different things that we run. There's baby group that's for children aged between 0-12 months. There's an extra visit which doesn't come off dad's normal visit. So, there's you know obviously more entitlement there and it allows dad more opportunity to bond with the baby - they get to change the baby, feed the baby, we have agencies coming in to do different activities it just gives lots of time for dad to bond with the baby and for mum as well. [Pact's baby group and family days are] not as busy as a normal visit. It's a lot nicer so it's you know kind of nurturing that family in there - We also run family day so again children, it can be step children, it can be nieces, so it's all kind of family ties that we are looking at but again it's an extra visit. They get to eat together which is really important - we provide a buffet so they get things that they're not able to do while dad is here and they get to eat together.

The FEWs explained that SYFP visits are interventions that aim to strengthen the child/parent bond and ensure that it is not hindered by parental imprisonment. Below, a FEW in Prison A describes the purpose of Baby Group which facilitates contact between the men and their infant children who are aged under 12 months:

Baby Group is, like I said, it's like a specific group that's made to support babies and it's all about attachment, so we do activities. So, the other day, we had Rhyme Time come in, so they do songs and rhymes. We do like baby first aid, baby bath, and yeah, and it's all about making sure that there's a bond between the baby because obviously the first year of a child's life are the most important so it's all about making sure they've got that attachment there. And then the family day is then for children who are older as well, for them to make sure they've got a relationship with their dad.

The FEWs' views in Prison B were the same; they referred to the bespoke visits as family engagement interventions: 'We'll run interventions that will support that family. So that might be baby group to allow dad to maintain his bond. That might be the arranging of family day'.

Similar to the men in prison, the parents in the community commented favorably on the services provided during SYFP visits. Key examples of these services were, as already noted, creative play, nappy changing, baby baths, and baby massage. The prisoners' partners believed that these activities gave the men the opportunity to acquire vital parenting skills, whilst bonding with their children, particularly if the man was a first-time parent: 'the baby's dad, he'd never been brought up around a child. He'd never seen nobody else change someone else's nappy, he don't make a bottle. So, when we first brought him here [to Baby Group] on the first ever time, it was the only chance he'd had to change a nappy. Otherwise, he wouldn't have done it until the baby was one year of age' (FM5). This prisoner's partner also hints at the inevitable reality that without SYFP visits, the child would miss out on vital bonding opportunities with the father during a crucial phase of her development.



### 7.6.3 *Liaising with external services*

Apart from the interventions offered during family visits, the project also works with external services to support the men and their families. Contacting social services to find out how to activate or reactivate contact between some of the men in prison and their children is the most frequent advocacy and brokerage service delivered by FEWs. The FEWs also support the men in their communications with social services and liaise with social services on behalf of the men, to help them navigate child protection issues so they can gain access to their child/ren who may then visit them in prison. This work is done where such access is deemed to be in the child's best interest. The following comments by a FEW in Prison A provides an insight into the advocacy and brokerage work done on behalf of the men and their families:

I do case work throughout on the wing, working with men to advocate on support, give them information and advice, liaising with social services is like a major part of that, helping with them get contact with their children if that's in their best interest ... in regards to like case work, the major thing there is liaising with social services if there's involvement with them. So that can be arranging legal visits for them to come in and meet with the dads, and then we can offer... provide support in those meetings, to kind of advocate and if the men doesn't necessarily understand what's going in the meeting, you can explain it.

Some of the men explained that the intervention of FEWS is crucial; it enables them to communicate with Social Services and work through the processes of gaining access to their children.

#### **Liaising with Social Services**

SU8 is a 27-year-old man who was on licence Recall and was sent to Prison A five months before the interview. Similar to the other men who had benefited from The FEWS' interventions with Social Services, he was no longer with the mother of his child and was receiving support from the FEWS who were liaising with social services and advocating on his behalf. This intervention was deemed vital by SU8 who was keen to re-establish contact with his child. There were two reasons why he was unable to establish contact with his son. First, the child was on the child protection register and secondly, the child's mother was reluctant to allow the child to visit what she considered to be a potentially risky (prison) environment. The FEWS intervened by supporting SU8 as he navigated the legal system and communicated with social services. Here, SU8 describes his experience:

My son was on the protection register. A member of Pact team went out to the meetings on my behalf. Anything really to do with my son, they help, really. He'll be three in July now. His mother won't leave him in here. But I have obviously, I tried obviously to see if that was you know, a thing to do but she won't allow it at the moment so. But yeah, other than that you know, they [FEWS] changed things up for me with the social services. The baby mother, I'm no longer...we're not in a relationship no more. That broke down so you know, she don't come down here. We don't really speak no more. So, it's a bit of up and down at the moment with the baby's mother. Obviously, back in 2016...yeah 2016, I went to court obviously because me and the baby's mother is not on talking terms. And I got a court order

which obviously the Pact team helped me privately prepare for that you know, give me a lot of information about what to expect and stuff like that, so yeah they supported me quite a bit. I got an order in place now, the order has been put in place last year. So, yeah, you know, I got a contact order in place now. Honestly, as soon as I get out I'll be seeing him then. It's just she won't allow me near, so yeah. It upsets me, but you know, I see it from her point of view honestly as well. Obviously bringing a baby into prison is not the best place I suppose.

The FEWs described the work they do with Social Services on behalf of the men and their families as a key aspect of the casework service they provide: 'I would say advocating on behalf of the men in regards to social services, I would say that's a major part of the project'.

Engaging with local schools to promote the welfare of children affected by parental imprisonment is another service provided. Here a FEW describes how this is done:

We work with schools. So, that might be giving some understanding with teachers about the effect of imprisonment on children. We've also liaised with schools in regards to having dad involved in the child's life whilst in custody and I've got a couple of schools who I've actually been in and done parents evenings for dads whilst they're in custody, so they're involved in the child's life. So that's had a really massive positive effect on the family.

Prisoners' partners also receive support; they are referred to relevant external agencies for support. Below a FEW in Prison A provides examples of services to which they are referred:

Agencies like Barnardos who also got a CSOF project which is Community Support for Offender's Families, working with like Citizens Advice Bureau, just different agencies really.

Another FEW, this time in Prison B, provides additional examples:

...we've also referred them (parents in the community) to playgroups out there. We run a project called T-POP which [a worker] runs which is our therapeutic outreach project. And that looks at working with the child through play to address any issues that they have. So, we can make referrals into that service. We've got Mentors we can make referrals into that service. It's looking at what the person needs.

There is a concerted effort to engage with internal and external partners to provide relevant services to parents and children affected by imprisonment.

#### *7.6.4 Offering therapeutic support*

A key theme that emerged from the interviews is that the FEWs provide therapeutic support to the men and their families. This involves listening to the men and their families as they talk about their difficulties and encouraging them when they are distressed. As this FEW in Prison A notes the support involves: 'creating space for them to talk and to kind of, giving them that emotional support'. Another in Prison B said: 'Sometimes, it's a little bit more in-depth and the men we

work with need bit of like they need emotional support before they can do anything. So just a bit of reassurance’.

All the men interviewed acknowledged this, with one of the men in Prison B stating that: when I’ve been a bit down and stuff and if I come around they’d [The FEWS would] talk to me and stuff and you know, just talk sense really to me when I’m feeling a bit down and you know. And they’ve offered support to my wife as well. They said if she needs anything like they’ll just talk to anyone and if she’s struggling you know, they’re always there to support and that so. And she does, she has a good chat with them when she comes in (SU11 Prison B).

## **7.7 How does the project support the parent in prison’s resettlement plans?**

### *7.7.1 Providing ancillary resettlement services*

Designing resettlement plans is another aim of the SYFP project. Although much of the family engagement work mentioned so far strengthen relationships, provide access to services, and in turn, provide ancillary resettlement support, formal resettlement planning with those approaching release, is primarily done by prison staff and partner agencies. An example is Pact Futures which provides ‘through the gate’ services. A FEW in Prison A notes: ‘that’s [resettlement] not something that we do ourselves but there is another agency within the establishment that we will refer to. So, if we identify somebody we are working with that hasn’t got accommodation upon release, then we would refer to the agency in here that can help’. A FEW in Prison B also said: ‘Pact Futures which is a different section of Pact, look after the through the gate contract. So, we might refer him to that to get him a bit of practical support which is essentially what that is, we’re looking at different agencies that are available to support their family together as part of their action plan ready for release’.

It appears that SYFP’s ability to engage in formal resettlement work is sometimes impeded by lack of adequate communication from the prison. As already noted, the FEWs in the two prisons stated that they were often unaware of a prisoner’s impending release. Nevertheless, they attempted to provide resettlement support to those approaching release, wherever possible. The support consisted of contacting relevant services to make referrals and request information they could relay to the men to ensure access to relevant support, services and contacts: ‘if we’re aware that someone’s going to be released, we’ll go in and speak to them and see if there’s any support we can give in regards to family. So that might be contacting social services again and seeing what they would like the men to do’. Where the FEWs were aware that a prisoner was due to be released, the resettlement service offered was personalised and tailored to suit individual circumstances.

Although it appeared that a formal resettlement strategy was lacking, much of the support provided to the men and their families including the family-friendly visits and courses offered, were also vital for resettlement. As one of the FEWs said: ‘all our services are geared towards resettlement so everything that we do is more geared towards resettlement’. The parenting and relationships courses sought to equip the men with skills required for maintaining good relationships with family members, which according to the desistance literature, is vital for

successful reintegration and desistance (Farrall et al. 2014). The special visits were also useful for successful resettlement. They ensured that the men did not lose contact with family members during the period of imprisonment. FEWs described the impact of SYFP visits, particularly their role in ensuring that the separation that accompanies imprisonment does not sever the bond between father and child. It ensures that the child can get to know the father. Therefore, upon release, the father can reengage fully with the child without having to go through a re-familiarisation phase that could be potentially traumatic for the child, and unsettling for the father. In her response to a question about the service's impact, a FEW noted that it produces a 'Fantastic impact'. She went on to elaborate on her response: 'it allows them to feel part of the family. It also allows them to maintain that bond. So, we are reducing the risk for when they're released because baby knows them so they're not screaming when dad get home'.

### 7.7.2 Organising resettlement-focused family conferences

FEWs offer additional services that can aid the resettlement process. For example, they provide a mediation service or a family group conference which brings a prisoner together with his family, and gives them the opportunity to discuss and resolve conflicts, with the FEW acting as a mediator:

we offer like a mediation or a family group conference. And speaking to partners and then speaking to the guy, they sometimes got different wants and wishes and they sometimes got different ideas about how things are going to work, so bringing them together for that mediation and talking them in a safe environment where we can say this is what's happening. sometimes it's building...it is just building bridges between their partners FEW1

Where the relationship between a prisoner and his partner has been fractured and the partner is reluctant to allow the man access to his child, the FEWs intercede on behalf of the man and work with both parties to build bridges and reinstate contact between father and child. One of the prisoners in Prison A attested to this: my ex won't let my son come in but they [FEWS] sorted that for me. They sort everything out when they say they're going to do it (SU16).

#### **Mediation Services**

In one case, a Probation Officer and a FEW, both of whom were interviewed in Prison B, liaised with an external probation officer, a prisoner's personal prison officer, and his aunt (who was his main family contact) to repair relations between the man and his partner's sister whom he felt was impeding his access to his child who was born whilst he was in prison. The intervention proved to be successful not only for repairing the relationship but also for the man's resettlement following release from prison:

The main role for me is that I supervise high risk of harm offenders in the prison. And if any of my prisoners have got young families, then, I would become involved with PACT. I mean I've had either with baby group, toddler group, family days or there have been a few where there have been quite intense one to one work with the FEW. There's one in particular that he did a massive amount of work with the FEW.

So, I'm their offender supervisor in here. So, if they get involved in something like that, then, I would liaise with PACT to see how they're getting on.

He [the prisoner] was serving...I think it was a 32-month sentence. He was a youngster and he was in for domestic violence, not against his current partner but her sister. But it was a very, very tempestuous relationship. I mean she assaulted him twice on visits, you know. So yeah, in front of staff. So, she wasn't easy.

He was a very, very needy person. But myself, the FEW and his personal officer on the wing spent hours and hours with him, and he obviously needed the support, benefited from it. There were lots of issues. The baby was born while he was in here. His then ex-partner did bring her in to be fed, despite their relationship having difficulties. And we had probably two or three meetings actually in the Pact office with the ex-partner. We invited outside probation. His personal officer came and also the prisoner's aunt, who was his main support, came in just basically trying to thrash out exactly who felt what, who was going to do what when he goes out, how it was going to work. Because everybody felt that unless something was done, he was going to go out, he was probably going to potentially assault his ex-partner if she tried to stop him from seeing the baby. And as I say, the personal officer was actually amazing with him, you know, sort of spoke to him for hours and hours on the wing, in the evenings and stuff. And I could remember all the wing staff said to us...he was being released on Christmas Eve. That was 2015, Christmas Eve 2015, and all the staff in the wing said he'll be back by Boxing Day. And he's still out. Yeah, he hasn't come back. And I checked with the FEW the other day, he's finished his license with outside probation, doing brilliantly. I think the fact that he was able to have a bond with that baby while he was here and that we managed to sort out who was going to do what and what they weren't going to do as well, you know. And I think I paid dividends, personally. I was really impressed with what the FEW did with that particular prisoner. PO4

## 7.8 Areas of limited provision

### 7.8.1 Domestic violence interventions

Providing access to domestic violence interventions is one of the project's aims. However, the provision most of the participants mentioned during the interviews was the special visits. This was by far the service the men and their partners accessed the most. Only few talked about their participation in other interventions. Therefore, the study could not assess whether the project provided domestic violence intervention although one of the FEWs in Prison A did indicate that a domestic violence-related course was due to start imminently in that prison: 'we're about to run this week a star relationship a STAR relationship course from Women's Aid. So that's looking at kind of relationships and healthy relationships, domestic violence and the consent and things which I think is really needed'. This view that domestic violence-focused intervention was required was echoed by another FEW in Prison A who said 'there's a lot of domestic violence issues in Prison A so that restricts the guys from speaking to his partner. So, I think when that happens they can't see their kids, they don't write'. It follows that intervention is required in this area to ensure that the service achieves its aim of supporting the men in their efforts to maintain family ties.

### 7.8.2 *Transfer plans and transitional arrangements*

Producing transfer plans for men who are about to be moved to another prison, so they can access Pact's family support interventions (if available in the receiving prison) is another aim of the project. A key obstacle to achieving this aim is the regime of the two prisons where most of the interviews were conducted (Prison A and Prison B). FEWs are sometimes unable to make transitional arrangements to support the men's transfer to other prisons. This is largely because most of the time, the FEWs are not notified when decisions are made to transfer the men to other prisons. When asked if transfer plans were prepared to ensure continuity of service delivery, the FEWs in Prison A stated that they were often unaware of an imminent transfer: 'We don't always know unfortunately. We're not always told when people are going to be transferred. Sometimes we do get knowledge that somebody's moving on so we can work with the family on that and we have done that on occasion. But I would say the largest majority of the time sometimes we don't have'. The situation was the same in Prison B: 'We don't always get to know. We're quite tight on numbers at the moment, so on [a nearby prison] you've got spaces. Somebody could be told they're going as the two guys were told first thing this morning and will go today because that's where the spaces are'<sup>10</sup>.

Where the FEWs are aware of an impending transfer, they do make concerted efforts to put transitional arrangements in place: 'if we are aware, [we] try and liaise with other Pact services and other prison systems there (FEW Prison A). In Prison B, a FEW similarly noted that: 'if the men were going to go to one of the prisons that PACT work in, that's obviously really easy, we got the same case management system, we would tie in with that Family Engagement workers'. Thus, transitional arrangements are more straightforward when a prisoner is transferred to a prison where Pact support is available, largely because the FEWs can access information about the support required on Pact's E-CINS database which is a centralized case management system where service users' case records are stored.

It is clear that current prison transfer arrangements are inimical to effective family engagement work because unannounced transfers disrupt such work. This is an area where prisons should work with family engagement services such as the SYFP project to establish effective transfer protocols and other collaborative arrangements that can address obstacles to implementation. Additional obstacles are discussed below.

## 7.9 **Obstacles to implementation**

### 7.9.1 *Prison Officers' Perceptions*

Most of the FEWs stated that prison staff were supportive of the service but there were indications that some prison officers were more supportive than others. A FEW in Prison A explained that the service triggered mixed reactions from prison staff: 'I think that when we first started I think that we were looked as fluffy that we're doing work. And, you know, we're just doing Family Days and, I think that officers recognise the work that families do and I think

<sup>10</sup> The two men in question were supposed to be interviewed for this evaluation but they were transferred to another prison without notice on the day scheduled for the interview. A similar incident occurred in Prison A.

that's clear from the number of referrals we get off officers. And I think the key to all this is working together and making sure people know as much as you can. You know, Prison A's an old prison and there's a lot of officers who were set in a way, there's a definite culture in Prison A, so I think there's a batch of new officers coming to door from the get go learning about family support, I think it's really important'.

Thus, although the reaction of some frontline prison staff was initially sceptical, over time, some have come to appreciate the SYFP project, not least because of the service's impact on the prisoners' wellbeing. There is growing realization that by improving the men's wellbeing, the service actually contributes to good behaviour and order in prison:

I think that more so now, I think that officers recognise the work that families do and I think that's clear from the amount of referrals we get off officers. So like this morning I came and I haven't been in this jail since Wednesday and I've got four referrals from officers, some are even from departments like different resettlement departments or agencies from officers, saying Hi can someone in your team come and visit us, I think that staff certainly more now see the benefit than they used to' FEW3

In Prison B, the FEWs' views were similar: 'I think that the mind-set is changing, you know. [Prison] staff that do become involved with us speak very highly and positively of us. In any job that you do, there's always dinosaurs. Irrespective of how much service they've got in, their attitudes are slightly different. I think the more staff appreciate the benefits of keeping that family together and help in reducing that risk of reoffending'

### **Case Study: A Prison Officer's Opinion**

PO3 is a male prison officer in Prison B and he is very supportive of the SYFP project:

We're on a shift pattern, but when they (the SYFP project) have the Family Days on I will often swap my days to come in on that one of the shifts because I quite enjoyed it, you know? It's brilliant.

He demonstrates his support in other practical ways. For example, he is actively involved in running the Family Days. He described his involvement and the impact of the more pleasant environment in which the Family Day visit is held. He admitted that he was initially skeptical that organizing more pleasant family visits would make any difference, but he observed that the visiting children appreciated the pleasant visiting environment:

I'm just used as a helper. I don't work with [FEW] all the time but when with the family days, I help her by getting prisoners from the wings to come down and choose the prisoners, who's the best example, making the teas and the coffees, bringing some of the prisoners down, helping them when they do the days, finding out what sort of theme they want and then helping with pictures and props, we did a Halloween one, an Easter one I did all the paintings for that and helping out with it. It's funny because a lot of the children they come in, they go straight to them, you know, and when I started doing that I thought, hmm, is it going to make a difference and it does. It does because [FEW] is the one who started all the paintings and she said this will help and I thought, well, I'll try it. She's right and it made such a difference and it was sitting

here a long time, I didn't think it would and she was right and I was wrong and it really did ... as an outsider I can see the benefits from that, you know? And I think they will have baby and toddler group in the mornings, like on Monday I think it is, I don't get involved so much in that aspect, you know, but that's popular again but the family day is the one.

### 7.9.2 *Conflicting priorities*

In Prison A, whilst the more senior prison staff and management are generally supportive and can appreciate the service's ethos, frontline officers working with the men routinely, may be supportive but are restricted in the level of support they can offer given that they are duty bound to prioritise prison security and order. Describing the mixed reaction of prison staff, a FEW in the prison stated:

I think that it varies. So, I think the governors and the kind of people maybe with more authority they're very supportive and they kind of really get the ethos of what we're doing. I think with prison officers who are more on the ground, I think some of them are supportive and they'll make referrals But I think in the day to day, sometimes their priority is obviously to keep kind of the peace and prevent disorder. So, I think sometimes probably it might be difficult for them to see both sides to kind of see what we're doing and the support we're giving. Because they're very focused on their role of kind of make sure everybody's safe and you know, not doing things they shouldn't be doing or anything, but, yeah. So, it's just kind of managing that.

In Prison B, interviews with FEWs and prison staff indicated that prison staff at all levels were broadly supportive of the project. One the FEWs in that prison did however allude to the difference between the professional culture of prisons officers and that of The FEWs. Whilst the former tends to prioritize security, discipline and order maintenance in prison, FEWs delivering the SYFP project focus on the welfare of prisoners and their families. This difference may on occasion, create a clash of cultures. Here a FEW describes the challenges of having to operate within a culture that is inconsistent with SYFP's ethos:

So, as an example, we run a Family Day and we're asking one of the officers to dress up as father Christmas and nobody would do it and the response was, so some of the officers was like, "I'm not doing that for them, you know, they shouldn't have done what they've done," you know. I think that sometimes some of the officers think that they should be punished - "Why should they be allowed a Family Day?" they say, "Well, you know, he's got children," "Yeah, but he was being cheeky to me the other day," and that has been really challenging to work with.

The obstacles posed by conflicting cultures can manifest in other ways within both prisons. Whilst the FEWs viewed special visits as entitlements, the prison service defines visits as a privilege. Eligibility is linked to assessment outcomes, and visits are reserved for those who have a record of good behaviour and have demonstrated through their behaviour, that they are



not a 'security risk'. Whilst these behavioural requirements motivate several men to avoid misconduct in prison, the requirements conflict with the SYFP project's ethos which defines Family contact through visits as a human right, not a privilege.

Apart from the culture clash and conflicting priorities mentioned above, the FEWs in both prisons referred to the difficulties of providing a welfare-based service in a restrictive security-focused environment where scheduled services were cancelled at very short notice to accommodate security-related priorities or sometimes because of limited staff resources. A FEW in Prison A said 'I would say the biggest difficulty has been because we're in a prison environment, like the regime is really restrictive, so if there's an issue going on in the jail, we got to be really mindful about that. We've got to be really flexible. So our Baby Group has been cancelled on many occasions because there's been no discipline staff to cover it'.

In Prison B, the situation was not any better, as one of the FEWs noted: 'there's barriers of the environment that we work in. So that might be simply we might say, "Right, we're going to put them in an intervention tomorrow afternoon." And there's a major incident in the establishment and we can't do that. So, you can't come in and say, "We will do this," because that's not just the way prison works'.

Some of the FEWs regretted the negative way in which such cancellations reflected on Pact: 'I think that gives PACT a bad reflection because the men and families are due to come in and have their Baby Group and then we're saying on Wednesday morning, "Oh, I'm really sorry it's cancelled," and they're like, "What? I'm on my way down." I think, you know, that's been really distressing and the governors in the prison that we work with are saying, you know, I'm really sorry to do this and needs must, and I think that's been really restrictive.' Acknowledging the challenge of having to deliver a welfare-oriented service in a restrictive setting where security and order maintenance are key operational priorities, a FEW explained that a degree of adaptation and knowledge of how to operate in such a regime is required: 'I suppose when you're working in a prison, the prison regime is a bit of an obstacle, but you kind of just work around it'.

### *7.9.3 Lack of sustainable funding*

Another obstacle to implementation is lack of sustainable funding and this affects staffing levels and the sustainability of the project. During this evaluation, the project was approaching the end of its funding contract and there was uncertainty about the likelihood of securing additional funding. Alluding to the lack of sufficient funding, a FEW noted that: 'In Prison A there's two, three full-time workers...the staff are overworked, there's not enough...their caseload is up here so if we didn't get any extra funding It's a worry for us and it's a worry for the men when we speak into them because they're going, "What do you mean you're going?" and we're like, "It's a four-year project, this is going to end and we can't guarantee that our funding,"

Discussions about limited funding and its impact on the project's sustainability uncovered the abject lack of alternative provisions in the two prisons. All the participants stated that no other

service offering similar support to the men and their families was available. A FEW in Prison B noted that: ‘there’s not somebody to sit down and do their action plan and support, someone to engage the social services, it’s quite daunting for a guy to be out with a social worker who they haven’t got the best relationship with, he doesn’t understand the jargon that the social worker’s using. I worry about that when we go because there’s nobody here because the prison officers are so overworked as well and there’s obviously massive cuts in recent years, there’s nobody to do it’. Asked if other services that could provide similar support exist, the FEW said: ‘No. No, absolutely nothing. Staff are rushed off their feet, they wouldn’t have the time or the knowledge’. In Prison A, it was noted that the only alternative option would be the prison chaplaincy which would not in any case, offer the level of support currently available through the SYFP project. A FEW said: ‘I think that their [the men’s] options, if we were to go tomorrow, will be to speak to the chaplain. There’s a chaplain service which are so overworked. they certainly wouldn’t be able to offer the support we support, but there’s no support available. And that’s a worry for us as we come to the end of our funding, we are preparing the men for our exit. So, we might not get funded for it again’.

Prison staff also emphasized that, without the service, prisoners and their families would not receive sufficient support to maintain adequate levels of contact and good quality relationships. Below, a Prison Officer interviewed in Prison A reiterates this and notes that there are limited resources available for this type of service: ‘if it wasn’t for Pact they [the men and their families] wouldn’t have the service, they wouldn’t know how to access things there are services out there that offer childcare facilities and family stuff but I don’t think the prison will know and I don’t think prison staff will know’.

## **8. PHASE 2: FINDINGS FROM QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

In phase two of the evaluation, the impact of the service was reviewed. The phase involved generating quantitative data to supplement the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews, and providing answers to the fourth research question which is as follows: How are the processes of delivering the project associated with its key objectives?

The aim of this phase was to observe whether the support and interventions provided by the SYFP project correlates with the key aim of improving family relationships and perceived parenting efficacy.

### **8.1 Sources of quantitative data**

The pre-and post-test measures employed for this phase of the evaluation were to the Pact Relationship Radar and the Tool for Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE). The researcher sought to include adjudication data but was unable to access the data.

#### *8.1.1 PACT relationship radar*

Pact Relationship Radar is used to assess prisoners’ views about the quality of their relationship with family members and significant others; before and after participating in PACT’s family

support projects (PACT 2015). The tool assesses patterns of attachments within relationships. It is a casework tool that is change-focused and useful for identifying deficits in relationship and parenting skills that should be addressed. The radar also identifies aspects of practice that should be improved to better support prisoners and their families.

The following domains are assessed by the radar and they can be used to assess whether the Supporting Young Fathers in Prison project is producing a positive impact:

- Improved relationship with children
- Improved relationships with family and key adults
- Positive social support networks
- Positive family relationships
- Improved communication with family
- Reduced impact of imprisonment

We were mindful that previous reviews of PACT projects had found that the Relationship Radar tool could be a limited source as some might not be completed and available for analysis (Dominic et al. 2016). This was the case for some of the radar data received and an attempt was made to access the missing data from the E-CINS case management system which generates data on prisoners including those participating in Pact's projects. The E-CINS case management data were not made available. Consequently, phase two of this evaluation relied on the radar data provided for 14 men and their partners.

#### *Tool of Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE)*

As already noted, another measure was used to assess the project's impact and this helped address the limitation posed by the unavailability of complete radar data and adjudication records. The additional measure employed was the Tool of Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE) which is widely used by a range of services including the National Health Service. It can be accessed free of charge following registration from <http://www.topse.org.uk/site/>. It has been widely used to evaluate parenting programmes and is useful for assessing the impact/effectiveness of projects. TOPSE is a multi-dimensional instrument of 48 statements within 8 scales: Emotion and affection, Play and enjoyment, Empathy and understanding, Control, Discipline and boundary setting, Pressure, Self-acceptance and Learning and knowledge. Items are rated on a Likert scale from 0-10 where 0 represents 'completely disagree' and 10 represents completely agree. Scales contain both positive and negatively worded items. Negatively worded items were reversed scored. Responses are summed to create a total score with higher scores representing higher levels of parenting self-efficacy. The maximum score for each TOPSE category is 60 and the measure has good reliability and validity with high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89$ ) (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2007).

## **8.2 How are the processes of delivering the project associated with its key objectives?**

Quantitative data analysis sought to answer the above question and was based on two sources of data:

- Before and after Pact Relationship Radar data on 14 men
- Before and after TOPSE data for 65 men over four years – to assess the project’s longer-term impact.

### 8.2.1 *Analysing before and after radar scores to assess short-term impact*

Radar information was received in respect of 14 men (rather than the anticipated 20). The 14 men completed the Relationship Radar Wheel Assessment before and after their involvement in PACT services aimed at improving relationships and communication with family members.

The Relationship Radar uses a Likert scale from 1(I feel really good about this) to 5 (That’s just how it is) to assess the quality of relationship, communication and support an individual has with family members. The wheel is divided into six categories: i) Improved relationship with children, ii) Improved relationship with family and key adults, iii) Positive social and support networks, iv) Positive family relationship, v) Improved communication with family and vi) Reduced impact of imprisonment. Each category comprises 3 questions.

The questions in each category were scored and averaged. Category mean scores were then added to give a total mean score. Lower scores represented more positive attitudes about quality of relationships with family members. Before and after scores were compared to assess the impact of PACT services on the quality of relationships prisoners had with their families.

Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 22. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of PACT services on the men’s perceived quality of relationships with their family members. The data were screened for errors and violation of assumptions prior to analysis. The assumption of normality was tested on the difference between total mean scores (Before – After). Review of the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality ( $SW = .931$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p = .320$ ) and an examination of skewness (-.616) and Kurtosis (-.274) indicate that normality was a reasonable assumption for this data. The assumption of normality is supported by visual representations of the data in both the histogram and Q-Q Plot.

Data were subjected to a paired-samples t-test on the basis that data were collected using a within-subjects, pre-post-test design, comparing one categorical independent variable (Time; with two levels before and after) against one continuous dependent variable (Relationship Quality). Analysis involved comparing differences in Relationship Radar scores before and after involvement in PACT services to assess the impact of these services on the men’s views about the quality of relationships and communication with family members.

### 8.2.2 *Relationship Radar Results*

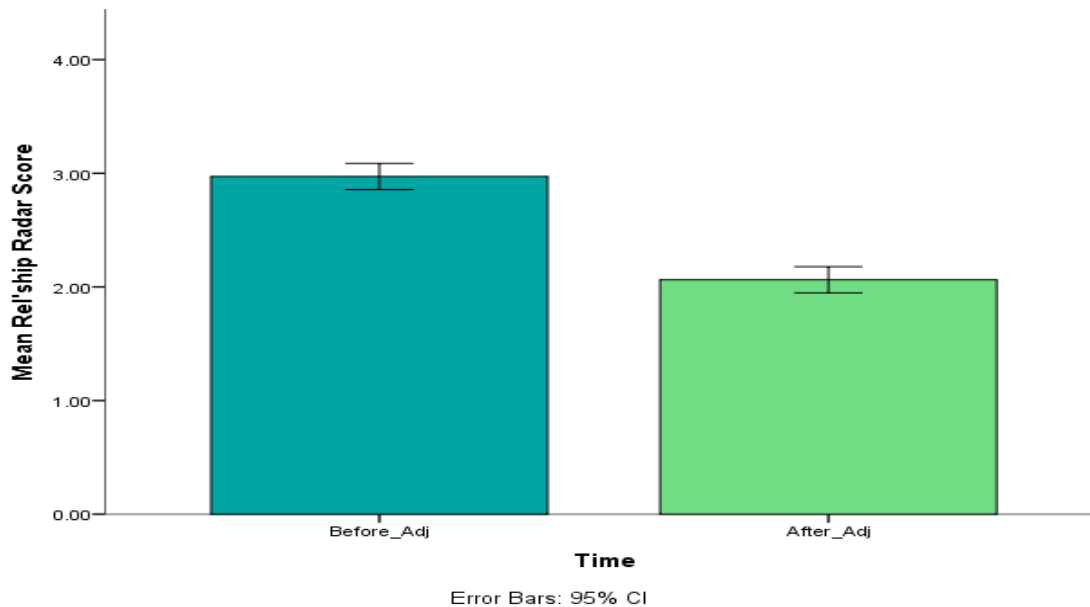
A statistically significant difference in Radar scores was found, with the men reporting less negative responses about their relationship quality with family members following participation in the SYFP project ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .296$  Vs.  $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = .370$ ),  $t(13) = 8.52$ ,  $p < .000$  (two-tailed) (See Figure 2 below). The mean decrease in negative responses was .91 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .68 to 1.14. The eta squared statistic (.57) indicates a large effect size. Improvements were represented most frequently in the following Relationship Radar categories i) Improved relationship with children, iv) Positive family

relationships, v) Improved communications with family and vi) Reduced impact of imprisonment.

**Figure 2: Before and after mean Radar Scores\***

\* Lower scores indicate more positive attitudes about quality of relationships with family members.

Note: Error bars represent standard errors on adjusted mean scores.



These results suggest that the SYFP project has a positive impact on the way parents in prison feel about their relationship with family members. It also improves parenting self-efficacy. It is worth noting that the very small sample size limits the generalisability of these results to the wider prison population. Furthermore, demographic data would have facilitated further analysis of the data in relation to additional variables such as age, length of imprisonment, frequency and duration of service involvement, and the location of prison (the distance family members have to travel can affect the frequency of contact and quality of relationships). These are examples of factors that could have had an impact on the results.

Nevertheless, the results do indicate that taking part in the SYFP project improves the overall communication and relationship men in prison share with their children, partner and other family members, and can help reduce the negative impact of imprisonment. The magnitude of the findings is supported by a large effect size ( $\eta^2 = .57$ ). Therefore, this evaluation supports the use of SYFP project to help improve communication and relationships between parents in prison and their families.

*8.2.3 Analysing before and after TOPSE data to assess longer-term impact*

The evaluation also analysed TOPSE data on men who had participated in the project's Baby Group visits over four years (from September 2013-August 2015, and September 2015-May 2017). The researcher accessed TOPSE data on parenting efficacy, generated from 65 parents before and after baby group visits, over that period. Complete data points were only available

for 42/65 participants. Participants completed the TOPSE before and after participating in Baby Group visits. Before and after scores were then compared in each of the eight TOPSE categories using parenting self-efficacy as the outcome measure. Scores were summed and used to compare levels of parenting self-efficacy before and after participation.

Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 22. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of baby group on levels of TOPSE (parenting self-efficacy) scores. The data were screened for errors and violation of assumptions prior to analysis and missing data points accounted for 23 out of the 65 leaving a total of 42 complete data points available for analysis.

The assumption of normality was tested on the total scores of self-efficacy measures for both before and after data. Review of the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality ( $SW$ -Before = .99,  $df = 41$ ,  $p = .912$ ) and ( $SW$ -After = .96,  $df = 41$ ,  $p = .196$ ), together with an examination of skewness before (-.13) and after (-.67) and Kurtosis before (-.60) and after (.66) suggested that normality was a reasonable assumption. The box-plots suggested a relatively normal distributional shape of the residuals. One outlier was identified (ID=42) but did not drastically effect the range of scores and was therefore retained for the analysis. Both histograms and Q-Q plots supported the assumption of normality.

The data were subjected to a paired-samples t-test on the basis that the data were collected using a within-subjects, pre-post-test experimental design comparing one categorical independent variable (Time; with two levels before and after) against one continuous dependent variable (TOPSE Scores). Analysis was used to compare differences in scores before and after intervention on each TOPSE category and overall parenting self-efficacy scores.

#### 8.2.4 TOPSE Results

The paired-samples t-test compared parenting self-efficacy scores before and after participation baby group visits. A statistically significant difference in TOPSE scores was found in each of the eight TOPSE categories, with prisoners scoring higher in all eight categories following participation in baby group (See Table 4 and Figure 3).

**Table 4: Before and after TOPSE scores (including standard deviations) and t-test results**

**TOPSE Category Scores Before and After Participation in PACT's Baby Group Programme in Prisoners**

TOPSE Category	IV- Time		Difference	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Before	After			
<i>Emotion &amp; affection</i>	34.18 (11.44)	46.98 (4.89)	12.8	8.74	64
<i>Play and Enjoyment</i>	30 (16.52)	49.54 (7.12)	19.54	11.48	64
<i>Empathy and understanding</i>	26.21 (8.92)	35.02 (5.74)	8.81	8.90	42
<i>Control</i>	26.43 (5.97)	33.90 (4.47)	7.47	8.79	41
<i>Discipline and boundaries</i>	15.19 (6.01)	40.21 (6.15)	25.02	18.18	41
<i>Pressures</i>	18.24 (6.54)	43.33 (8.57)	25.09	15.25	41
<i>Self-acceptance</i>	18.76 (7.89)	40.86 (8.95)	22.1	13.44	41
<i>Learning and knowledge</i>	21.10 (7.33)	43.95 (9.84)	22.85	15.45	41

**Note:** Standard deviations appear in parentheses below means. \* =  $p < .001$

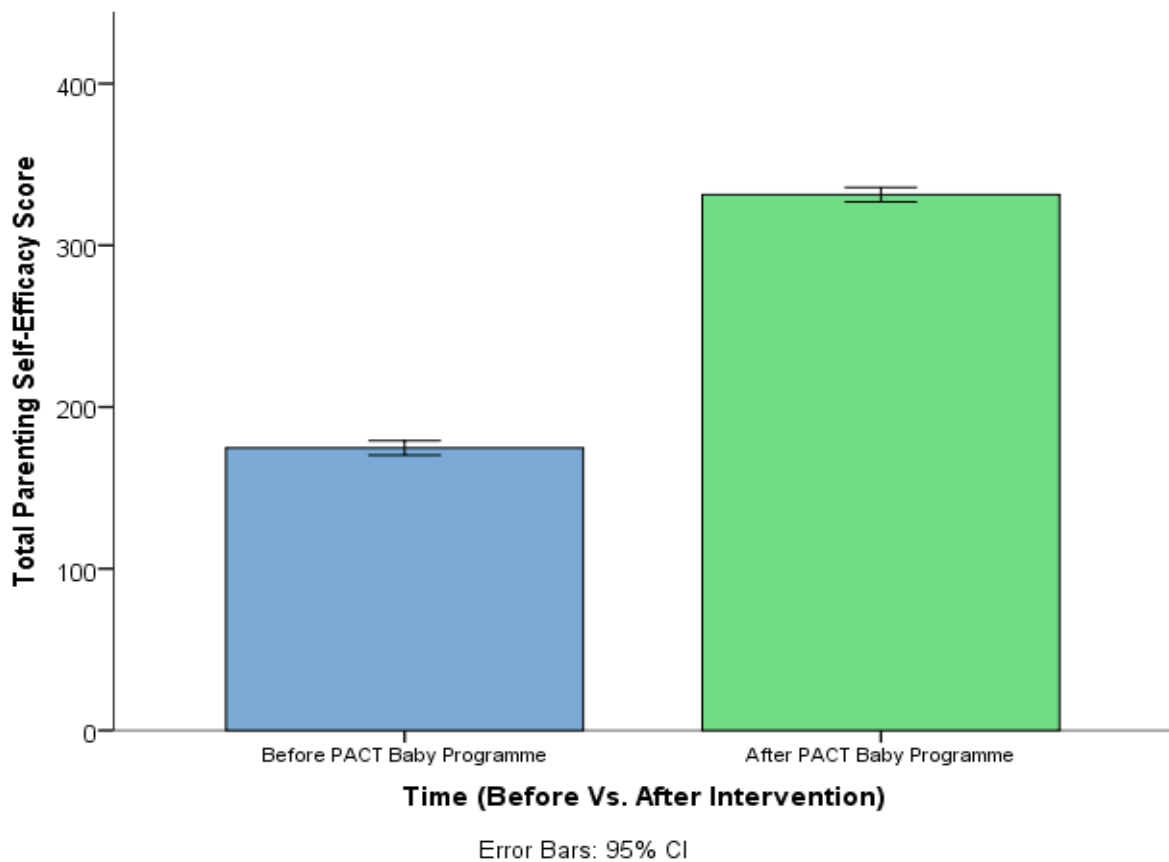
Scores were highest initially in the areas; 'Emotion and Affection', 'Empathy and Understanding' and 'Control'. These areas showed the lowest increase in scores following intervention. 'Discipline and boundaries' and the 'Pressures' categories showed the greatest improvement in scores, closely followed by 'Self-acceptance', 'Play and enjoyment' and 'Learning and knowledge'.

A statistically significant difference was found for overall parenting self-efficacy scores (total TOPSE scores) with an increase in parents' perceptions of self-efficacy following participation in the intervention ( $M = 174.69$ ,  $SD = 30.33$  Vs.  $M = 331.36$ ,  $SD = 20.02$ ),  $t(41) = 35.529$ ,  $p < .000$  (two-tailed) (See Figure 1). The mean increase in TOPSE scores was 156.67 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 165.57 to 147.76. The eta squared statistic (.63) indicated an intermediate effect size.

These results reinforce the results of Relationship Radar analysis presented earlier and demonstrate SYFP's baby group visits can have a positive effect on several relationship and parenting skills and can enhance the men's overall perception of their parenting efficacy. The

TOPSE results indicate that taking part in SYFP project's services improves the men's perceived confidence and their self-efficacy in relation to each of the eight areas of parenting self-efficacy assessed by the TOPSE. An intermediate effect size (eta squared = .63) supports the magnitude of the results. However, as with the radar data, the relatively small sample size limit the generalisability of results to the wider prison population. In addition, analysis the categories covered by TOPSE, in relation to demographic data, would have permitted broader analysis.

**Figure 3: Before and after mean TOPSE scores**



Note: Error bars represent standard errors.

Scores were highest initially in the areas 'Emotion and affection', 'Empathy and understanding' and 'Control'. These areas showed the lowest increase in scores following intervention. 'Discipline and boundaries' and the 'Pressures' categories showed the greatest improvement in scores, closely followed by 'Self-acceptance', 'Play and enjoyment' and 'Learning and knowledge'.

A statistically significant difference was found for overall parenting self-efficacy scores (total TOPSE scores) with an increase in parents' perceptions of self-efficacy following participation in the intervention ( $M = 174.69, SD = 30.33$  Vs.  $M = 331.36, SD = 20.02$ ),  $t(41) = 35.529, p < .000$  (two-tailed) (Table 4). The mean increase in TOPSE scores was 156.67 with a 95%



confidence interval ranging from 165.57 to 147.76. The eta squared statistic (.63) indicated an intermediate effect size.

These results reinforce the results of the Relationship Radar analysis presented earlier and demonstrate that SYFP's baby group visits have a positive effect on men's overall perception of their parenting self-efficacy. However, again, the relatively small sample size limits the generalisability of results to the wider prison population. In addition, further analysis of the categories covered by TOPSE, in relation to demographic data, would have permitted broader analysis.

That said, similar to the Relationship Radar results, the TOPSE results indicate that accessing the SYFP project's services improves the men's perceived confidence and their self-efficacy in relation to each of the eight areas of parenting self-efficacy assessed by the TOPSE. An intermediate effect size (eta squared = .63) supports the magnitude of the results. In addition, this evaluation supports previous research which identify TOPSE as an appropriate tool for assessing parenting self-efficacy in relation to different parenting programmes. Again, given these results, this evaluation supports the use of SYFP's baby group visits to help improve parenting self-efficacy within the prison population.

## 9. Discussion and Recommendations

The evaluation found that the SYFP project achieves its aim of strengthening relationships between men in prison and their families. The services provided by the project, particularly the family friendly visits, improve the wellbeing of the men and their visiting families. In addition, the project offers advocacy and brokerage services that help the men and their families access relevant support services. Indeed, inter-agency collaboration is at the core of the project and FEWs who deliver the project liaise with external and internal support services to provide family support. The men in prison are given access to parenting, relationship, therapeutic, resettlement and other services within the prison whilst their partners access some of these and other external services. There is evidence that by providing access to relevant services, the project improves the men's relationship and parenting skills as well as their overall perception of their parenting efficacy, although a small sample has been used to generate this finding, with implications for its generalisability.

Nevertheless, all the service users interviewed for this study emphasised that the project improves family relationships and helps to ameliorate the profoundly adverse impact imprisonment on most families. Examples of the negative effects of imprisonment include the profound sense of isolation and loss, and the desperate need to maintain contact in order to sustain family relationships.

The findings of this evaluation also demonstrate that the SYFP project helps men in prison achieve three key dimensions of desistance and they are: positive bonds with family members, hope and a positive self-identity, in this case, parenting self-efficacy. Positive bonds with significant others with whom a prisoner shares a positive non-criminogenic relationship, can encourage desistance from offending. As Ugwudike (2017b) observes, relationships with supportive family members equip service users with social capital<sup>11</sup>. Desistance scholars emphasise this. For example, Farrall (2004: 61) notes that: '...family relationships which are in some way supportive, either emotionally or practically' represents one of the 'most important ingredients of social capital for the individual in Western countries'. By engaging with supportive family members, men in prison are more likely to acquire social links or 'ties and social contacts' which facilitate access to resources required for resettlement. Examples of these resources include suitable accommodation and employment. These are resources that are vital for secondary desistance, social participation and inclusion. It follows that maintaining family relationships is vital for successful resettlement.

By supporting families to maintain contact and relationships during imprisonment, the SYFP project also contributes to desistance in other ways. Maintaining contact with family members instils hope that a positive future with family members is possible after a period of imprisonment, and hope has been identified as a vital dimension of secondary desistance:

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<sup>11</sup>Farrall (2004: 59) defines social capital as a multidimensional concept that refers to the: social links or 'connections' between people; a resource that inheres in the social bonds people share with others; or 'trust and engagement in civil society'.

‘desistance studies suggest that hope and hopefulness are important factors ... hope plays a key part in these processes’ (McNeill and Weaver 2010: 5,13).

Furthermore, by enhancing the men’s parenting self-efficacy, the project contributes to another important dimension of desistance which is a transformed self-identity. Desistance scholars note that moving away from the ascribed label or identity of ‘criminal’, towards a positive identity such as ‘a good father’ can improve desisters’ self-identity and encourage them to make positive changes in their lives (Maruna and LeBel 2010). Indeed, the desistance literature refers to the ‘knifing off’ process through which desisters divest themselves of their criminal history and negative self-identity in order to adopt a prosocial lifestyle and corresponding identity (Maruna and LeBel 201; Maruna 2004: 274; Farrall et al. 2014; Sampson and Laub 2005). For most of the men interviewed for this study, the opportunity to parent from prison by performing a range of tasks for their children (with the SYFP project’s support), reinforced their parental identity. This, in addition to the opportunity to maintain their relationship with their partner, motivated them to take active steps to avoid trouble in prison and make other positive changes in their lives. Utilising their agency, they (sometimes proactively) participated in self-improvement courses such as relationship and parenting classes in order to transform their lives.

### **9.1 What are the best approaches to improving future provision across the prison estate and in the community?**

A key aim of this evaluation has been to examine the processes of delivering the SYFP project and to assess how to improve future provision. It is envisaged that this report and its recommendations will ensure that practitioners and policy makers are better informed about the specific needs of young parents affected by imprisonment and would consider their needs in the development of future policy and practice. Insights from the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study have informed the following recommendations most of which relate to issues that are within the remit of the prison regime and beyond the SYFP project’s control.

### **9.2 Recommendations**

- Prisons should replace normal/ordinary prison visits with family-friendly visits such as those delivered by the SYFP project. SYFP visits strengthen relationships, improve behaviour in prison and aid the resettlement process. By contrast, normal/ordinary prison visits are inimical to family relationships and the wellbeing of those involved (the visitors and the prisoners).
- Prisoners’ children should be given frequent access to family-friendly visits. Normal prison visits limit the ability of children to interact and bond with their parent in prison. Infants and other very young children who are unable to understand prison regulations may not realize that their father is required to remain seated throughout a normal prison visit. It is therefore quite possible that the children construe their father’s inability to move away from his seat and interact with them, as parental rejection and this can be traumatic.

- Prisons should establish operational policies and communication channels in collaboration with family support services such as the SYFP project. This will ensure that services are not cancelled without adequate notice and prisoners are not transferred to other prisons without transfer plans and transitional family support arrangements. In addition, coordinating resettlement services with SYFP staff would strengthen resettlement provision.
- Prison policy should reflect the importance of family ties. The current policy of defining the prison visit as an earned incentive is inconsistent with the SYFP project's ethos which defines family support services, including family-friendly visits, as rights to which prisoners are entitled, not as earned incentives.
- Prisons should draw on insights from research on the key role of family members in supporting resettlement and desistance, and develop a commitment to fostering family ties by commissioning services such as the SYFP project and ensuring that their sustainability is not threatened by lack of funding.
- Funding is a crucial issue and the limitations it poses affects the scope of the SYFP project, and contributes to staff shortages. This was observed in Prisons B and C.
- The SYFP project should explore the possibility of introducing a domestic violence intervention that can where relevant, help equip the men with effective relationship skills and other skills required for avoiding the conflicts that damage family relationships.

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## 13. Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### An Evaluation of the Supporting Parents in Prison Project

**Introduction:** Researcher should introduce him/herself and state current position in Swansea University

**The research:** You have been invited to participate in this interview. The interview will help us find out your views about the work the ‘Supporting Parents in Prison’ project team are doing to help you and your family maintain contact, strengthen your relationship, and access the services you need.

- Please tell us what you think: is this a good time to conduct this interview?
- If not, when do you feel it will be a good time to conduct the interview?

Please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form to indicate your willingness to participate in this interview. Thank you

#### The semi-structured interview schedule

*(Researcher’s notes: These are indicative questions that may be refined before the interviews to ensure that they are adequately theoretically informed and sufficiently focused on the central research questions).*

This schedule focuses on the following research questions:

- How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?
- How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?
- How does the project direct parents in prison and their families to relevant sources of support?
- How does the project support the parent in prison’s resettlement plans?

The relevant themes are: enabling prisoners to engage in their child’s life from prison, improving behaviour, directing prisoners and their families to relevant services, and supporting prisoners’ resettlement plans.

**Enabling parents in prison to engage in their child’s life from prison, and the impact on behaviour** (much of this stems from the support provided by PACT workers such as Family Engagement Workers, Family Support Workers, and Volunteer coordinators).

*(Researcher’s notes: The questions in this section derive from research which consistently identify ‘relationship needs’ as one of several factors that are linked to reoffending, and many people in prisons across England and Wales have ‘multiple, complex needs’ in this area - Wood et al. 2015: 1. The questions also derive from other similar studies that have reviewed PACT’s family support projects – for example, Dominey 2016).*

1. Please tell me when you started receiving support from a PACT worker/PACT workers or from PACT’s services.

- *(Researcher's notes: only those who have received support in at least 2 months before the interview may participate. They could also be receiving support at the time of the interview).*
2. How often did you have contact with your spouse/or partner – for example through visits, telephone calls, letter, etc. before you received support?
    - *(Researcher's notes: Check how often – for example, fortnightly, monthly, etc.).*
  3. Have there been any improvements since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe how the contact has improved, if not, please describe how you feel the support provided could be improved.
  4. If the respondent states that his contact with his spouse/partner has improved since receiving support, ask this question: How does seeing your spouse/partner affect you?
    - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that maintaining contact improves his physical and emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationship with his spouse/partner, and/or produces other positive outcomes).*
  5. How has maintaining contact with your spouse/partner affected your relationship?
 

*(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his relationships with his spouse/partner)*
  6. How often did you have contact with your child/children – for example through visits, telephone calls, letter, etc. before you received support?
    - *(Researcher's notes: Check how often – for example, fortnightly, monthly, etc.).*
  7. Have there been any improvements since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe how the contact has improved, if not, please describe how you feel the support provided could be improved.
  8. If the respondent states that his contact with his child/children has improved since receiving support, ask this question: How does seeing your child/children affect you?
    - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that maintaining contact improves his physical and emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationship with his child/children, and/or produces other positive outcomes).*
  9. How has maintaining contact with your child/children affected your relationship?
 

*(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his relationships with his child/children)*
  10. How do you feel your children find the experience of visiting you in prison?
    - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the parent identifies difficulties during visits or any behavioural changes).*
    - Why do they experience it this way?
    - If the parent states that the child/children find the experience negative, ask this question: What is being done to improve their experience of visiting you in prison?
    - What more can be done?



*(These supplementary questions will provide insight into the support that is provided to encourage family contact).*

11. Have there been any differences in your child/children's behaviour since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe the changes.
  - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the parent identifies any behavioural improvements).*
12. What was your relationship with your child/children like before you received support?
13. What is your relationship with your child/children like now?
  - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies aspects of support that have improved the quality of the relationship).*
14. How would you describe your abilities as a parent before you received support?
15. How would you describe your abilities as a parent now?
  - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies aspects of support that have improved his abilities as a parent).*
16. Has receiving support had any impact on your abilities as a parent? If yes, please describe how this has been the case. If not, please describe how the support provided could be improved.
17. What are the things that make keeping in touch with your family difficult?
  - *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies key barriers to contact such as distance, costs of visiting etc.).*
18. What is being done can be done to make sure that you are able to keep in touch with your family more often? Who is providing this support?
  - *(Researcher's notes: Check the key things parents in prison identify as crucial for maintaining family ties. Check if the respondent states that prison staff, project workers, etc. have done anything to improve his level of contact with his family member/s).*
  -
19. What more can be done to make sure that you are able to keep in touch with your family?
  - *(Researcher's notes: This question will also generate data on the key practices parents in prison consider relevant to their ability to maintain contact with their family members).*

### **Directing prisoners and their families to relevant services**

The questions below derive from research that highlight the unique difficulties prisoners and their families encounter as a direct result of imprisonment. For example, Smith and colleagues' (2007) report of a study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that prisoners' families experience severe financial difficulties and accommodation problems, particularly where the prisoner used to be the breadwinner. Studies also reveal that imprisonment can: sever family ties, exacerbate the social exclusion of prisoners, increase the likelihood that their family members will engage in long-term criminality, and produce

adverse psychological and other implications for prisoners and their families (Light and Campbell 2007). The seminal study by Roger Shaw (1992) interviewed the children of imprisoned fathers. The study found evidence that having a father in prison is linked to psychological trauma and behavioural problems. Other more recent studies reinforce these findings (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012). Supporting these young parents, diverting them away from reoffending and teaching them to become better parents is one of the most important and effective ways of breaking the cycle of crime (Sherlock, 2004). Furthermore, there is evidence that services aimed at improving parenting skills and relationships produce positive outcomes for children who have a parent(s) in custody (Pallot & Katz, 2014).

20. Since you have been here, have you participated in, or attended any services/groups/programmes that try to help people maintain a good relationship with their partner/spouse in the community? If yes, please tell me the names of the services.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there are front-line (in-house) services and external services that contribute to the project's aims, such as Baby Group, Family Days, Time for Families relationship courses, peer support groups and resettlement conferencing).*
  - How did you find out about the services/ who directed you to these services?
  - How has the support provided affected your relationship with your family? *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved their relationships with their families)*

21. Since you have been here, have you participated in, or attended any services/groups/programmes that try to help people maintain a good relationship with their children? If yes, please tell me the names of the services.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there are front-line (in-house) services and external services that contribute to the project's aims, such as Baby Group, Family Days, Time to Connect parenting courses, Time for Families relationship courses, peer support groups and resettlement conferencing).*
  - How did you find out about the service/s? / who directed you to these services?
  - How has the service/s affected your relationship with your family?
  - How has the service/s affected your relationship with your child/or children? *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his relationship with his child/or children)*

### **Supporting prisoners' resettlement plans**

The following questions derive from research, which highlights the importance of working with prisoners and their families to access services that aid the effective resettlement of prisoners (Codd 2007; Edgar et al. 2011). Supporting family members who have a father, husband or child in prison to engage in resettlement is extremely important, Patricia O'Brien (2001) believes it is a key element to re-establishing family relations and reintegration

effectiveness (Codd, 2007). There is also evidence that supporting prisoners and their families in order to improve their social circumstances, for example, by enabling their engagement with services, courses and relevant groups can aid the desistance process (Farrall 2002; Farrall et al. 2014; Maruna 2001).

22. Will you need help with sorting out things like where to live and how to find a job when you leave prison? If yes, please describe what you will need help with.

23. Is there anyone or any agency that can help with these things?

24. *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent responds that he has had advice or participated in course/group/service that makes him feel confident that he will have/find somewhere suitable to live, find a job, or access any other relevant services when he leaves prison. Also check if he states that family members will provide requisite assistance. Desistance studies show that fostering family ties can significantly aid key dimensions of resettlement such as finding suitable employment; family members can help provide the links and information required for getting a job - Farrall et al. 2014).*

25. Is there anything else you can tell me about the help or support you will need when you are released and how you will get that help?

### **Overall assessments of the project**

26. What sort of information is provided about the services available to you and your family?

*(Researcher's notes: Check if the following are readily available: written media – providing information and advice in the form of publications for families, materials for professionals, project blogs and twitter feeds).*

27. What was your experience like in prison before you received support? What is your experience like now?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his wellbeing and behaviour in prison).*

28. What was your physical health in prison like before you received this support? What is your health like now?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his physical health in prison).*

29. What was your emotional health in prison like before you received this support? How is your emotional health now?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his emotional health in prison).*

30. How satisfied are you with the things done here to help you maintain contact with your family?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check how the respondent assesses the services in place to help prisoners maintain contact with their family).*

31. What more should be done to help you maintain contact with your family?

32. What more should be done to help you maintain a good relationship with your family?

**Demographic information (this is a tentative list that could be expanded to include more questions if necessary).**

Before we end the interview could you please answer these questions:

1. **Age** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Gender**  
 Male   
 Female   
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. **How long have you been here in (enter name of prison)?**  
 Less than one month   
 1- 6 months   
 7- 12 months   
 13- 14 months   
 2 years+   
 Don't know/Unsure   
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Please state your status in prison**  
 Remand   
 Convicted awaiting sentence   
 Sentenced   
 Licence recall   
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
5. **What is the length of your sentence?**  
 Less than 1 year   
 Between 1-2 years   
 More than 2 years but less than 5 years   
 5 years or more but less than 10 years   
 10 years or more   
 Don't know/Unsure
6. **When will you be released?**  
 Less than one month   
 1- 6 months   
 7- 12 months   
 12 months or more   
 Indeterminate sentence/lifer   
 Don't know/Unsure
7. **Please state your marital status**  
 Married   
 Unmarried but in a relationship

Single   
Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. **Please state your age** \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Please describe your ethnicity**

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/Irish

Other white background – please specify nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Mixed ethnicity

Black/African British

Black/ Caribbean British

Other Black Background – please specify nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Asian/British – please specify nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Other Asian Background – please specify nationality \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Please do not hesitate to contact your PACT worker or a member of prison staff if you have any questions.**

## Appendix 2

### An Evaluation of the Supporting Parents in Prison Project

**Introduction:** Researcher should introduce him/herself and state current position in Swansea University

**The research:** You have been invited to participate in this interview. The interview will help us find out your views about the work the ‘Supporting Parents in Prison’ project team are doing to help you and your family member in prison maintain contact and access the services you need.

- Please tell us what you think: is this a good time to conduct this interview?
- If not, when do you feel it will be a good time to conduct the interview?

Please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form to indicate your willingness to participate in this interview. Thank you

### **The semi-structured interview schedule**

*(Researcher’s notes: These are indicative questions that may be refined before the interviews to ensure that they are adequately theoretically informed and sufficiently focused on the central research questions).*

The schedule focuses on the following research questions:

- How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?
- How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?
- How does the project direct parents in prison and their families to relevant sources of support?
- How does the project support the parent in prison’s resettlement plans?

The relevant themes are: enabling prisoners to engage in their child’s life from prison, directing prisoners and their families to relevant services, and supporting prisoners’ resettlement plans.

**Enabling prisoners to engage in their child’s life from prison, and improving behaviour** (much of this stems from the support provided by PACT workers such as Family Engagement Workers, Family Support Workers, and Volunteer coordinators).

*(Researcher’s notes: The questions in this section derive from research which consistently identify ‘relationship needs’ as one of several factors that are linked to reoffending, and many people in prisons across England and Wales have ‘multiple, complex needs’ in this area - Wood et al. 2015: 1. The questions also derive from other similar studies that have reviewed PACT’s family support projects – for example, Dominey 2016).*

33. Please tell me when you started receiving support from a PACT worker/PACT workers or from PACT’s services.

- *(Researcher’s notes: only those who have received support in at least 2 months before the interview may participate. They could also be receiving support at the time of the interview).*

34. How often did you have contact with your spouse/or partner – for example through visits, telephone calls, letter, etc. before you received support?

- *(Researcher’s notes: Check how often – for example, fortnightly, monthly, etc.).*

35. Have there been any improvements since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe how the contact has improved, if not, please describe how you feel the support provided could be improved.
36. If the respondent states that the level of contact with his/her spouse/partner has improved since receiving support, ask this question: How does seeing your spouse/partner affect you?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that maintaining contact improves his/her physical and emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationship with his/her spouse/partner, and/or produces other positive outcomes).*
37. How has maintaining contact with your spouse/partner affected your relationship?  
*(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved the relationship with his/her spouse/partner)*
38. How often did your spouse/partner in prison have any contact with your child/or children – for example through visits, telephone calls etc before you received support?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check how often – for example, fortnightly, monthly, etc.).*
39. Have there been any improvements since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe how the contact has improved, if not, please describe how you feel the support provided could be improved.
40. If the parent in the community states that the parent in prison now maintains regular contact his child/or children, ask this question: How does having contact with their father affect the child/children?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that maintaining contact improves the child/or children's personal wellbeing, behaviour, and produces other positive outcomes. Also check if the respondent believes that maintaining contact has improved the relationship between the child/or children and the parent in prison).*
41. How do you feel your child/children find the experience of visiting their father in prison?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the parent identifies difficulties during visits or any behavioural changes).*
  - Why do they experience it this way?
  - If the parent states that the child/children find the experience negative, ask this question: What is being done to improve their experience of visiting you in prison?
  - What more can be done?  
*(These supplementary questions will provide insight into the support that is provided to encourage family contact).*
42. Have there been any differences in your child/children's behaviour since you started receiving support? If yes, please describe the changes.
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the parent identifies any behavioural improvements).*

43. What was your relationship with your child/children like before you received support?
44. What is your relationship with your child/children like now?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies aspects of support that have improved the quality of the relationship).*
45. How would you describe your abilities as a parent before you received support?
46. How would you describe your abilities as a parent now?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies aspects of support that have improved his/her abilities as a parent).*
47. Has receiving support had any impact on your abilities as a parent? If yes, please describe how this has been the case. If not, please describe how the support provided could be improved.
48. What are the things that make keeping in touch with your spouse/partner in prison difficult?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent identifies key barriers to contact such as distance, costs of visiting etc.).*
49. What is being done can be done to make sure that you are able to keep in touch with your spouse/partner in prison more often? Who is providing this support?
- *(Researcher's notes: Check the key things the respondent identifies as crucial for maintaining family ties. Check if the respondent states that prison staff, project workers, etc. have done anything to improve the level of contact with his or her spouse/partner in prison).*
  -
50. What more can be done to make sure that you are able to keep in touch with your family?
- *(Researcher's notes: This question will also generate data on the key practices parents in the community consider relevant to their ability to maintain contact with their spouse/partner in prison).*

### **Directing prisoners and their families to relevant services**

The questions below derive from research which highlight the unique difficulties prisoners and their families encounter as a direct result of imprisonment. For example, Smith and colleagues' (2007) report of a study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that prisoners' families experience severe financial difficulties and accommodation problems, particularly where the prisoner used to be the breadwinner. Studies also reveal that imprisonment can: sever family ties, exacerbate the social exclusion of prisoners, increase the likelihood that their family members will engage in long-term criminality, and produce adverse psychological and other implications for prisoners and their families (Light and Campbell 2007). The seminal study by Roger Shaw (1992) interviewed the children of imprisoned fathers. The study found evidence that having a father in prison is linked to psychological trauma and behavioural problems. Other more recent studies reinforce these findings (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012). Supporting these young parents,



diverting them away from reoffending and teaching them to become better parents is one of the most important and effective ways of breaking the cycle of crime (Sherlock, 2004). Furthermore, there is evidence that services aimed at improving parenting skills and relationships produce positive outcomes for children who have a parent(s) in custody (Pallot & Katz, 2014).

51. Since your spouse/partner went to prison, have you participated in, or attended any services/groups/programmes that try to help people maintain a good relationship /get on well with their spouse/partner in prison? If yes, please tell me the names of the services.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there are front-line (in-house) services and external services that contribute to the project's aims, such as Baby Group, Family Days, Time for Families relationship courses, peer support groups and resettlement conferencing).*
  - How did you hear about the services/who directed you to the services?
  - How has the support provided by the service affected your relationship with your spouse/partner in prison? *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved their relationships with their families)*

52. Since your partner went to prison, have you participated in, or attended any services/groups/programmes that try to help people maintain a good relationship with their children? If yes, please tell me the names of the services.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there are front-line (in-house) services and external services that contribute to the project's aims, such as Baby Group, Family Days, Time to Connect parenting courses, Time for Families relationship courses, peer support groups and resettlement conferencing).*
  - How did you hear about the service/s? / who directed you to these services?
  - How has the service/s affected your relationship with your child/or children? *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved the relationship with his/her child/or children)*

### **Supporting prisoners' resettlement plans**

The following questions derive from research that highlights the importance of working with prisoners and their families to access services that aid the effective resettlement of prisoners (Codd 2007; Edgar et al. 2011). Supporting family members who have a father, husband or child in prison to engage in resettlement is extremely important, Patricia O'Brien (2001) believes it is a key element to re-establishing family relations and reintegration effectiveness (Codd, 2007). There is also evidence that supporting prisoners and their families in order to improve their social circumstances, for example, by enabling their engagement with services, courses and relevant groups, can aid the desistance process (Farrall 2002; Farrall et al. 2014; Maruna 2001).

53. Will your spouse/partner need help with sorting out things like where to live and how to find a job when he leaves prison? If yes, please describe what he will need help with.

54. Are you able to help your spouse/partner sort these things out? If yes, please describe how you will provide the help that is needed.

- *(Researcher's noted: Check if the respondent states that he or she will provide requisite assistance. Desistance studies show that fostering family ties can significantly aid key dimensions of resettlement such as securing accommodation and finding suitable employment; family members can provide accommodation and the links and information required for getting a job - Farrall et al. 2014)*

55. Is there anyone or anyone or any agency that can help with these things?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent responds that he/she and the parent in prison have had advice or participated in a course/group/service that makes him/her feel confident that they will have access to relevant resources when the parent in prison is released).*

56. Is there anything else you can tell me about the help or support you and your partner will need when he is released and how you will get that help?

### **Overall assessments of the project**

57. What sort of information is provided about the services available to you and your family?

*(Researcher's notes: Check if the following are readily available: written media – providing information and advice in the form of publications for families, materials for professionals, project blogs and twitter feeds).*

58. What was your physical health like before you received support from PACT workers or PACT's services? What is your health like now?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his physical health in prison).*

59. What was your emotional health in prison like before you received this support? How is your emotional health now?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the respondent states that the service has improved his emotional health in prison).*

60. How satisfied are you with the things done to help you and your child/children maintain contact with your spouse/partner in prison?

*(Researcher's notes: Check how the respondent assesses the services in place to help prisoners maintain contact with their family).*

61. What more should be done to help you and your child/children maintain contact with your spouse/partner in prison?

62. What more should be done to help you get on well with your spouse/partner in prison?
63. What more should be done to help your child/children maintain a good relationship with their father in prison?

**Demographic information (this is a tentative list that could be expanded to include more questions if necessary).**

Before we end the interview could you please answer these questions:

10. Age \_\_\_\_\_

11. **Gender**

Male

Female

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

12. **How long has your spouse/partner been in prison?**

Less than one month

1- 6 months

7- 12 months

13- 14 months

2 years+

Don't know/Unsure

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

13. **How were your family's financial needs taken care of before your spouse/partner was sent to prison?**

I was employed

My partner was employed

Both of us were employed

Social Security benefits

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

14. **How are your family's financial needs taken care of now your spouse/partner is in prison?**

I am employed

Social Security benefits

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Please state your spouse's/partner's status in prison**

Remand

Convicted awaiting sentence

Sentenced

Licence recall

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**16. What is the length of your spouse's/partner's sentence?**

Less than 1 year

Between 1-2 years

More than 2 years but less than 5 years

5 years or more but less than 10 years

10 years or more

Don't know/Unsure

**17. When will he be released?**

Less than one month

1- 6 months

7- 12 months

More than 12 months

Indeterminate sentence/lifer

Don't know/Unsure

**18. Please state your marital status**

Married

Unmarried but in a relationship

Single

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Please state your age \_\_\_\_\_**

**20. Is this prison near your home? (Less than an hour's drive/or by train)**

Yes

No

Not sure

**21. If you and your spouse/partner have children, do you bring your children along when you visit your spouse/partner in prison?**

Yes

No

Please provide a reason for your answer\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for participating in this interview. Please do not hesitate to contact your PACT worker or a member of prison staff if you have any questions.**

### **Appendix 3**

This survey seeks to find out your views about the processes of delivering the ‘Supporting Parents in Prison’ project which seeks to improve the relationships between young parents in prison and their partners (the parents in the community), and provide positive outcomes for

their children. You have been invited to participate in this interview because of your role in implementing the project.

- Please tell us what you think: is this a good time to conduct this interview?
- If not, when do you feel it will be a good time to conduct the interview?

Please read and sign the attached Informed Consent Form to indicate your willingness to participate in this interview. Thank you.

1. Please state your current role
  - a. Prison Governor
  - b. Head of Service
  - c. Project Lead
  - d. Prison Staff
  - e. Family Support Worker
  - f. Family Engagement Worker
  - g. Volunteer (please specify your title) \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If you are delivering Pact's project, how long have you been involved in the project?
  - a. Less than one month
  - b. 1-6 months
  - c. 7- 12 months
  - d. 13- 14 months
  - e. 2 years+
  
3. Please describe your role \_\_\_\_\_

### **Semi-structured schedule**

*(Researcher's notes: These are indicative questions that may be refined before the interviews to ensure that they are adequately theoretically informed and sufficiently focused on the central research questions).*

The schedule focuses on the following research questions:

- How does the project help parents in prison engage with their families from prison?
- How does the project improve the behaviour of parents in prison?
- How does the project direct parents in prison and their families to relevant sources of support?
- How does the project support the parent in prison's resettlement plans?

The relevant themes are: enabling prisoners to engage in their child's life from prison, directing prisoners and their families to relevant services, and supporting prisoners' resettlement plans.

### **Enabling prisoners to engage in their child's life from prison, and improving behaviour**

*(Researcher's notes: The questions in this section should be directed at all participating staff (prison staff and Pact project staff). The questions derive from research which consistently identify 'relationship needs' as one of several factors that are linked to reoffending, and many*

people in prisons across England and Wales have ‘multiple, complex needs’ in this area (Wood et al. 2015: 1).

1. What support is Pact providing in this prison to help prisoners maintain good quality relationships with their families?
  - (Researcher’s notes: Check if specific support is being provided as part of the ‘Supporting Young Parents in Prison’ project, to help parents in prison build strong relationships with their families – the parents in the community and their children).
2. How do prisoners and their families access the support?
  - (Researcher’s notes: Check if there is ease of access). If access appears to be difficult, ask the following question –
3. What can be done to improve access to the support provided by Pact?
4. What impact does the support provided have on the level of contact between prisoners and their families? Please provide the reasons for your response.
5. Does the support provided improve the prisoners’ behaviour? Please provide the reasons for your response.
6. Does the support provided improve the prisoners’ wellbeing? Please provide the reasons for your response.
7. How else would the prisoners access this support if it wasn’t being provided by Pact?

### **Directing prisoners and their families to relevant services**

The following questions should be directed at Pact project workers only. The questions derive from research that highlights the unique difficulties prisoners and their families encounter as a direct result of imprisonment. For example, Smith and colleagues’ (2007) report of a study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that prisoners’ families experience severe financial difficulties and accommodation problems, particularly where the prisoner used to be the breadwinner. Studies also reveal that imprisonment can: sever family ties, exacerbate the social exclusion of prisoners, increase the likelihood that their family members will engage in long-term criminality, and produce adverse psychological and other implications for prisoners and their families (Light and Campbell 2007). The seminal study by Shaw (1992) interviewed the children of imprisoned fathers. The study found evidence that having a father in prison is linked to psychological trauma and behavioural problems. Other more recent studies reinforce these findings (Boswell and Wedge 2002; Rakt et al. 2012). Supporting these young parents, diverting them away from reoffending and teaching them to become better parents is one of the most important and effective ways of breaking the cycle of crime (Sherlock, 2004). Furthermore, there is evidence that services aimed at improving parenting skills and relationships produce positive outcomes for children who have a parent(s) in custody (Pallot & Katz, 2014)

8. How are the needs of parents (in prison and the community) who are access Pact’s services identified?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if a 'needs assessment' is conducted for each family - the parent in prison, the parent in the community and their children - to produce a family action plan and if the project workers believe that assessments are fit for purpose).*

9. What is done to address the needs identified? What services are provided? What services/support do you (in particular) provide?

*(Researcher's notes: Check if a family action plan is devised for each family and if it informs referrals to relevant services).*

10. Does Pact provide any in-house services to the participating prisoners? If yes, please name the services.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there are front-line (in-house) services which contribute to the project's aims, such as Baby Group, Family Days, Time to Connect parenting courses, Time for Families relationship courses, peer support groups and resettlement conferencing).*

11. Have you received any training on how to support prisoner and their families? If yes, could you please describe when, and what the training entailed.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if there is training and awareness raising for professionals to ensure that they are supporting families to best effect, including Hidden Sentence Training, Bridging the Wall events, Wales Practitioner Network development, learning dissemination events and presentations to individual agencies).*

12. How do prisoners and their families access relevant information about the services provided by the project?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the following are readily available: written media – providing information and advice in the form of publications for families, materials for professionals, project blogs and twitter feeds).*

13. Is enough being done to ensure that the project helps the young parents and their families access the services they need?

### **Supporting prisoners' resettlement plans**

The questions in this section should also be directed at Pact project workers only. The questions derive from research which highlights the importance of working with prisoners and their families to access services that aid the effective resettlement of prisoners (Codd 2007; Edgar et al. 2011). There is also evidence that supporting prisoners and their families in order to improve their social circumstances, for example, by enabling their engagement with services, courses and relevant groups can aid the desistance process (Farrall et al. 2014; Maruna 2001)

14. Does Pact provide any services to help resettle the prisoners who are about to be released? If yes, please describe what is done.



15. Does Pact provide any services to help prisoners who are about to be transferred to another prison? If yes, please describe what is done.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if assessments are conducted to identify the services prisoners should access to support their resettlement plans. Also, check if a resettlement plan is devised for each prisoner approaching the end of his sentence and the steps taken to ensure that the prisoner can access relevant services. Transfer plans should also be prepared to ensure that prisoners transferred to other prisons are able to access Pact's services readily).*

16. Is anything done to involve prisoners' families in resettlement planning? If yes, please describe what is done to involve them.

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if families are also referred to services that can help resettle the prisoners such as accommodation/housing services. In addition, check if family members are given the support they need so they can help in the resettlement process. Desistance studies show that fostering family ties can significantly aid key dimensions of resettlement such as finding suitable employment; family members can help provide the links and information required for getting a job - Farrall et al. 2014).*

17. How useful are the resettlement services that support the prisoners' transition from prison?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the services are deemed fit for purpose and if steps should be taken to improve the services or access to the services).*

18. How useful are the transfer services that support the prisoners' transition from one prison to another prison?

- *(Researcher's notes: Check if the services are deemed fit for purpose and if steps should be taken to improve the services or access to the services).*

19. Please tell me anything else you have to say about the resettlement processes/services and transfer services available.

### **Overall assessments of the project**

20. Please describe the key benefits of the project.

21. Do you feel that the support you provide facilitates contact between prisoners and their families? Please provide the reason/s for your response.

22. Do you feel that the support you provide improves relationships between prisoners and their families? Please provide the reason/s for your response.

23. Do you feel that the support you provide improves the prisoners' wellbeing? Please provide the reason/s for your response.

24. Do you feel that the support you provide improves the prisoners' behavior (for example, offending, self-harm, suicidal tendencies etc.)? Please provide the reason/s for your response.
25. Please describe your thoughts about your ability to manage your current caseload.
26. How do prison staff view your role? How useful do they feel your role is?
27. How do the prisoners view your role? How useful do they feel your role is?
28. Which external services/agencies do you work with to provide services? How would you describe your experiences of working with them?
29. Please outline the service/s the parents access the most. Why do they assess these services the most?
30. Please outline the service/s you consider to be effective. Why do you consider the service/s to be effective?
31. Please describe the obstacles that have affected project delivery. What has been done to address these obstacles?
32. What more should be done to improve the relationships between parents in prison and their families (the parents in the community and their children)?
33. What more should be done to improve outcomes for the children of young parents in prison?
34. Please tell me anything else you have to say about the project.

**Thank you very much for participating in this interview. Please do not hesitate to contact the researchers if you have any questions.**