

**Cross-Party Group on Children and Families  
Affected by Imprisonment  
Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
1-2pm**

**Attendance:** Mary Fee MSP, Nancy Loucks, Rebecca Joyce, Elaine Stalker, Sarah McHardy, Laura Scofield, Tim Haines, Jude Clarke, Emma Youens, Christine Bain, Lisa Mackenzie, Carol Robinson, Margaret Slater, Janice Wilson, Lexi Smart, Georgina Lyttle, Susan Galloway, Richard Simpson MSP, Gwen Edwards, Eddie Follan, Dan Cairns, Niki Stark

**Apologies:** Helen McClymant, Georgina Lyttle.

<b>Welcome and apologies</b>	<b>Action</b>
Mary Fee welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
<b>Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</b>	<b>Action</b>
The minutes were circulated and agreed as an accurate note of the discussion.	<b>If there are any matters arising, contact Mary Fee's office or Nancy Loucks at Families Outside.</b>
<b>Update on Parliamentary Business</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p>Mary Fee (MF) has continued to submit questions about prisoners on remand and support for themselves and their families.</p> <p>Progress has been made in relation to amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill which Mary got through. Ministers have been in discussion with Mark and Eddie from Barnardo's. Mary has a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Children's Minister Aileen Campbell to discuss how to take forward those amendments.</p> <p>There were concerns that the Government would dilute the amendments, rendering them meaningless, however things looking very promising, with the amendment remaining within the Criminal Justice Bill.</p> <p>MF managed to ensure that child and family impact assessments will be done.</p> <p>This year has ended on a resounding success.</p>	<b>Mary Fee will circulate responses to the questions in due course.</b>
<b>Scottish Prison Service: Support for Families</b>	
<p>Carol Maltman (CM) – National Young People &amp; Families Manager, SPS</p> <p>CM thanked everyone for the invitation, and stated what a fantastic opportunity she felt this was. CM congratulated Mary on the Child and Family Impact Assessments which will make a huge difference to families and improve the outcomes for children in Scotland. SPS support this 100% and are looking forward to being involved in the process of carrying out these assessments.</p>	

CM commented that she is currently involved in work around the Named Person. Currently, she is working to find out who within SPS would be best placed to carry out the role of the Named Person. This is particularly for those under 18 in the care of SPS – but there is also a duty as a Named Person service provider to share information about children that visit Scottish prisons. Any concerns should be shared with another Named Person service provider.

CM feels that this is a fantastic opportunity for SPS to engage with Families Outside's newest member of the team (Tim Haines, Family Support Manager) at the teachers' CPD event. The sharing of information will allow SPS to build stronger, more positive, wider relationships with primary and high schools, and others who can make a difference for children.

CM is also involved in Corporate Parenting under the Children and Young People Act – to support and improve the outcomes for those under the age of 26 that have had experience of care.

CM feels that Child Impact Assessments will not only help shape the future for children of prisoners, but will also improve outcomes for the whole family. They will also encourage SPS staff to get relevant and appropriate information from prisoners when they come to custody, to let the prisoner know they are supported and SPS can provide the best support in Scotland to the children affected by having a family member in custody.

National Support Advisory Board advises in relation to any child protection issues that arise in the prisons. Families Outside supports SPS in relation to staff training in this area, by delivering training to staff within the prison establishments as well as in a supportive capacity with the new recruits at the SPS college. This involves promoting positive relationships – parenting, children and families, young people and child protection.

SPS currently has 60 Family Contact Officers in total, based in every prison. Some FCOs carry out these duties alongside other duties within the prison, whilst for others it is their stand-alone role. Carol feels that the FCOs go the extra mile for families.

CM stated that the Chief Inspector of Prisons said there has been a marked improvement in the way SPS is working with families.

CM gave examples of positive work done by the Family Contact Officers. This included parenting programmes and facilitating child contact. Early Years Scotland commented that the support one particular young man received within the prison had a very positive effect on his parenting skills.

The young man is facing another court case, and his solicitor has asked Early Years Scotland and the FCO team to submit some background information around this, showing the importance of Child Impact Assessments. To ensure support is ongoing, these parenting classes will still be available to the prisoner in the prison after he is released from custody, as they are not currently available in his community.

CM gave another example of good practice, focusing on a young man affected by parental imprisonment who was experiencing anger issues, and his younger sister who was demonstrating anxious behaviours. This example demonstrated the positive impact that good partnership working can have on children affected by imprisonment. The boy's parents also attended parenting classes within the prison to help them in supporting their son at this difficult time. Dad was released on Home Detention Curfew, and SPS worked to ensure that the family would still be supported on release by Police Scotland and Families Outside.

CM feels that progress is being made. Initiatives which are focused on the child, such as child impact assessments, are allowing SPS to look at their own environment and how they support families. She feels that Scotland is on the right road with the Named Person and GIRFEC approach to child protection.

MF thanked CM for giving some background into her role and the role of FCO. Mary felt that the story of the two young children highlighted the need for family impact assessments.

MF asked CM if she thinks there will be a time when more resources are given to FCOs, allowing there to be more stand-alone FCOs. She also asked for CMs thoughts on the named person – does she have concerns that this initiative will become a ‘tick box’ exercise? Will you have the time and the capacity to do the job as it’s intended?

CM – there are currently 62 under-18s who are in the care of SPS. Under-18s are currently held at both Polmont and Cornton Vale. There are currently no under-18s in HMP Grampian, but there are plans for them to return. There are plans to identify someone to look after under-18s who will play a weekly part in that young person’s life. 62 young people is a manageable number, as not all of them will need interventions all of the time. Each young person should arrive in custody with a Child’s Plan, which should outline the key areas for support. The unit manager and personal officer have been highlighted as having responsibilities for young people in the care of SPS. These staff will need the right support and training, including a knowledge of GIRFEC. SPS will work with external agencies for support and training, and to ensure the best outcome for children.

The responsibility to share information about children who visit the prison comes under the SPS child protection procedures.

CM carried out a review of the role of the FCOs. The aim is to ensure that, regardless of the establishment that a person’s family member is in, the same level of support will be available to families. The report which was produced as a result of the review is available on the SPS website.

Jude Clarke cited the good work done by the Family Hub at Cornton Vale. She asks if it is acceptable that such an integral part of the support package for families is not funded by SPS. She also asked who is evaluating the work done by the FCOs, and whether bad experiences are taken on board in the same way that positive ones are.

CM is very proud of the work carried out by Cornton Vale and the other establishment’s family centres. SPS funds are primarily used for the care and safeguarding of those in custody. NL informed the group that the National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group has been speaking with the government about this particular issue, and an interdepartmental discussion including public health, children and families and community justice has taken place. A decision will be announced next week.

CM explained that the family is always involved when developing new policy and procedures, and everything is evidence based. SPS interviewed hundreds of families and children to identify what they needed from SPS during such a difficult time in their lives. SPS is audited against standards for family contact, and the Chief Inspector of Prisons monitors the work that is done. CM acknowledged that SPS does not have the experience of working with families which external agencies such as Families Outside have, and so having such agencies based in visitors centres benefits the families and allows SPS to learn from them and develop good practice.

**In future, SPS will be looking at how to measure standards and will be looking at developing a job description for FCOs.**

AOB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="70 241 1284 421">- Families Outside National Conference, Tuesday 1st December, Perth Concert Hall Booking forms circulated Spaces still available – ‘family led event’ similar to last February’s CPG. Small round table discussions so that conference is based around topics chosen by families themselves. Space still available for families/organisations working with families.</li> <li data-bbox="70 465 1284 678">- Prison Reform Trust Programme Manager, Yvonne Donald. Started on Monday based in Families Outside head office in Edinburgh Received funding for 3-year post. Interested in the reduction of imprisonment for women. If anyone is interested in talking to Yvonne, please get in touch with Families Outside.</li></ul>	

**Date of Next Meeting: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016 (Police Scotland, TBC)**