Prison Visitors’ Centres

An opportunity for engagement

Prof. Nancy Loucks
11 June 2013
What have families ever done for us?

- Reduced risk of reoffending
- Improved behaviour in prison
- Improved mental health
- Increased likelihood of reunification after release

Conversely: family breakdown as risk factor in and out of custody
Impact of Imprisonment on Families

- Loss of income
- Loss of housing
- Shame
- Victimsation
- Cost and logistics of transport
- Impact on children
- Lack of information
- Little involvement in the decisions that affect them
Support for families

- 72% of families visiting prisons were not receiving support from any outside agency
  - Pugh & Lanskey 2011

- Following the employment of a development worker at the Visitors’ Centre at HMP Edinburgh, use of information within the Centre increased from 16% to 82% of visitors surveyed.
  - Loucks, Nugent, and Stalker 2009
4.1 Visitor centres where they exist, are an essential focal point for offering support to families and can offer signposting to a range of support services, decrease the stress that is associated with visiting a prison and facilitate inter agency working. Providing these minimum services will ensure that the establishment can meet the basic needs of visiting prisoner’s families… and when services for visitors are well managed and provided for, families and other agencies are more likely to engage positively.

MoJ PSI 16/2011 Providing Visits and Services to Visitors
Visitors’ Centres should act as a ‘bridge’ between prisons and the community, as a tool in building public relations, as a useful neutral venue for engagement with families, and as a ‘gateway’ for links with community-based supports.

- Families Outside 2010
Value for money?

For the cost of less than one officer we get contented visitors leading to good visits producing contented prisoners.

To give the information/support required to families in a remote geographical area would be almost impossible without the Visitors’ Centre.

- prison governors cited in Loucks 2002
Recognising Quality
An Evaluation Toolkit for Prison Visitors’ Centres

2011 (3rd edition)

- Essential criteria
- Suggested evidence
- Good practice
Costs

The average cost of running a prison Visitors’ Centre is about the same as the direct cost of keeping one prisoner in custody for a year.

Even if running costs of Visitors’ Centres were doubled, these costs remained significantly less than the cost to the public purse of the average offender reoffending after release.

- New Philanthropy Capital 2005
Integrated Family Support: visits support to families resettlement-focused help

- Potential benefits to the State of between £515,465 and £3,479,294 over one year

- Middle estimate of £1,281,240, or £11.41 for every £1 invested

- New Economics Foundation 2012
  Economic Study of Integrated Family Support Programme (IFS)
nef 2012 (cont’d):

- Savings come from:
  - Reduced reoffending
  - Social and health care savings for families
  - Cost avoidance in resettlement planning

- Did not take into account:
  - future potential positive impacts on children and their life chances, etc.

- Costs avoided v. ‘cashable’ savings?
What do visitors’ centres do for us?

- Access to vulnerable families
- Child protection/Children’s Act
- Risk assessment & management
- Home Detention Curfew, Home Leave and parole (and information on these)
- Prevention of breach
- Prevention of crime
- Assistance with immediate difficulties
- Prevention of longer-term problems
What do visitors’ centres do for us?
What do visitors’ centres do for us?

- Outcome 4: Young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- Outcome 6: Live longer, healthier lives
- Outcome 7: Tackle the significant inequalities in Scottish society
- Outcome 8: Improve the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- Outcome 9: Scotland’s communities live lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- Outcome 11: Strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
- Outcome 15: Public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive
Prison Visitors’ Centres

Thanks!

www.familiesoutside.org.uk