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## Reducing re-offending: supporting families, creating better futures

A Framework for improving the local delivery of support for the families of offenders

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Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**



department for  
**children, schools and families**

## Reducing re-offending: supporting families, creating better futures

A Framework for improving the local delivery of support  
for the families of offenders

This information is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at  
[www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)



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## Ministerial Foreword

For many of us, family life is the most important aspect of our lives. It provides us with love and emotional support. It is a source of both practical and financial support. It is a place where children grow, learn and achieve. It is also a place where we can find the support to make lasting changes to our lives for the better. We overlook these strengths too often when we are working with people or delivering services. Many of our efforts become missed chances when we do not see the whole family and do not work together to support it.

This is especially true when we are working with offenders and their children and families to reduce crime in our communities. 'Think Family' means securing better outcomes for children, young people and families with additional needs by co-ordinating the support they receive from children's, young people's, adult and family services.

Families can play a significant role in supporting an offender to make and sustain those changes which reduce re-offending. Research suggests that having family ties can reduce the likelihood of re-offending by 39 per cent. Children's futures are heavily influenced by family circumstances and, worryingly, 63 per cent of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend in later life. The prospects for the children of women prisoners are of real concern to all services working with them.

We must also continue to protect families from abuse. Safeguarding children and supporting victims of violence will always be our highest priority.

This is why the Government is committed to a national programme of reform and culture change that involves police, probation, prisons, schools, children's services, the NHS and job centres, working with our partners:

- to improve the identification and support of adults experiencing problems who are parents or carers; and
- to coordinate the support that is provided by different agencies to the same family and in particular families experiencing significant problems.

Since April 2008, all local authorities have been receiving extra funding to support these reforms and introduce targeted services for parents and families experiencing particular problems.

This Framework sets out how 'Think Family' philosophy and practice can be implemented to improve support for offenders' children and families in the community and through intervention at each stage of the Criminal Justice System. It outlines what can be done by the different agencies to work with offenders' families and children. Practitioners will find it especially useful as it brings together in one place the tasks that should be followed in regard to offenders' families and children. Directors of Offender Management will find it helpful to inform the development of regional and local partnership plans.

It gives us an exciting opportunity to improve outcomes for offenders' children and families. We realise that this cannot be achieved without the hard work and dedication of the wide range of services reflected in this framework. Partnership working, improved planning, commissioning and joint commissioning are core to its successful delivery. They are the means by which we can improve consistency of delivery. They are the means to join up services working in the Criminal Justice System with services in the community that are focused on children and families and will be key in making sure we meet our shared aims.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dawn Primarolo".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria Eagle".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vernon Coaker".

**Dawn Primarolo**  
**Minister of State**  
**Children, Young People**  
**& Families**

**Maria Eagle**  
**Minister of State**  
**Ministry of Justice**

**Vernon Coaker**  
**Minister of State**  
**Schools and Learners**

## 1. Introduction

### **Vision**

A coherent system to support offenders' children and families by ensuring:

- Strong national, regional and local partnerships are in place and working together on the Every Child Matters and Reducing Re-offending agendas.
- There is greater consistency in meeting the needs of offenders' families and there are clear routes for them to be able to access support.
- Families are supported within local communities at each stage of the criminal justice system, ensuring that the children are in receipt of relevant universal services and linking them with relevant targeted services to support them through the process.
- That all parts of the system 'Think Family' and local authorities offer targeted parenting and family support for children and families of offenders with additional needs.
- Children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, harm are identified and safeguarded.
- We achieve a diverse Third Sector, working with offenders' families and helping us to make the case for investing in these families as part of a wider agenda to tackle social exclusion.

- 1.1 Working with the children and families of people in the criminal justice system is an agenda shared by many departments and agencies and requires a joined up response.
- 1.2 The provision of multi-agency support for this group of, often vulnerable, families is crucial to Government objectives on tackling child poverty and inter-generational disadvantage.
- 1.3 The Framework outlines the key tasks needed to improve the support offered by agencies working with the children and families of offenders as part of an overarching framework for interventions.
- 1.4 It sets out the policy context, highlighting future directions and opportunities and provides examples of best practice developed by Government agencies and Third Sector organisations across the country.

## 2. Key tasks within the framework

### **Vision**

Families are supported within local communities at each stage of the criminal justice system and are linked-up with universal services which can provide help throughout these stages and beyond.

- 2.1 The successful delivery of this Framework will require co-ordination of a comprehensive range of support services targeting:
- Families
  - Children
  - Vulnerable adults
  - Young people – juveniles and young adults
  - Offenders
- 2.2 The key points where children and families of offenders engage with the criminal justice system and need support include:
- Arrest and Search
  - Pre-trial
  - Sentencing at court
  - During a Community Order
  - Custody – reception and induction
  - Visitor centres
  - Pre release
  - Post release

## Principles

- 2.3 The key Government departments in England have signed-up to the following principles in achieving this vision:
- Offenders, including prisoners, will have the opportunity to maintain and develop appropriate family and community ties.
  - The well-being and safeguarding needs of offenders' children are taken into account at all stages of the Criminal Justice System and by local authorities and other local agencies delivering services to children.
  - Families and children of offenders are treated with respect and are helped with appropriate information and support through the co-ordination of local services.
  - Support for offenders and their families will address the diversity of need, including the specific needs of women, BME and disabled offenders and their families.
- 2.4 But it is not just about the right principles; we also need to see the right actions on the ground. The following key tasks have been identified in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and Government Departments who have agreed them. They should inform the development of standards and help practice across the piece.<sup>1</sup>

### Role of local services and agencies in supporting the children and families of offenders

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Local agencies develop a plan for the implementation of a policy to support the children and families of offenders facing social exclusion which will encourage and support staff to work across boundaries as part of the implementation of 'Think Family' reforms	Local Authorities Local Children's Trusts Local Strategic Partnerships
Service providers ensure that offenders' families receive timely information, advice and guidance about the benefits to which they entitled, and other sources of help with financial and legal difficulties	Jobcentre Plus Legal Services Commission

<sup>1</sup> The Directorate of Operational Policy and Commissioning within NOMS is currently undertaking a review of policy and is developing a service specification for the Children and Families Pathway for application across custody and community. This may require a revision to the tasks identified for NOMS within this Framework.



Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
As part of their strategic housing role, Local Authorities should use their housing strategies and a range of existing powers to address the housing needs of vulnerable families, including the families of offenders	Local Authorities
Offenders' families are able to access information about drugs and alcohol issues through partnership working when drug misusers are arrested or released from custody	NTA DAATS CJITs
Local services consider how they can provide relationship support for families after a prisoner has been released, especially in cases where there is no supervision by the Probation Service	Local Authorities Local Children's Trusts Local Strategic Partnerships
<p>Implementation of effective anti-bullying policies in schools to support children of offenders</p> <p>Schools have policies that promote the welfare of offenders' children</p> <p>School children are informed of the availability, purpose and access routes to services that are in place to support them</p> <p>Schools know where they can obtain support and relevant materials (e.g. Ormiston Trust, Action For Prisoners Families and Thames Valley Partnerships)</p>	Schools
<p>Services work together to ensure a mechanism for the referral of information about offenders' children who are at risk of poor outcomes and require early intervention</p> <p>There is a clear lead professional in these cases</p>	Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) Local Authorities
In cases where children of offenders are at risk of poor outcomes, there is an assessment of the child's needs; provision of education support to support their development; and family support to maximise their well-being, including through the CAF where appropriate	LSCBs Local Authorities

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Offenders' families can access support in their parenting role and how to maximise their children's development	Local Authorities – link to lead professional or service Children's Centres Extended Schools
There are clear protocols in place on sharing information to support collaboration between organisations to support the safeguarding and well-being of offenders' children	Local Authorities Chief Officers of Probation
In every area there are multi-agency and multi-disciplinary systems and services in place, in line with local safeguarding procedures, which safeguard and promote the well-being of offenders' children	LSCBs

### **Role of offender management services in supporting the children and families of offenders**

- 2.5 The Probation Service in each of the areas in England work in partnership with other local agencies managing offenders, many of whom are from socially excluded groups. As part of this work they will take account of offenders' children and families, particularly when the offender presents a risk to them.
- 2.6 The Children Act 2004 requires inter-agency co-operation to improve the well-being of children. The overall aim of the Act is to move away from a reactive to a proactive way of engaging with children, with a fundamental shift in emphasis to much earlier intervention and prevention. The effect of the Children Act duty is that, whilst the Probation Service is primarily responsible for working with adult offenders, it will need to consider the children or child siblings of the offenders with whom they are working.

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Provide an assessment of the offender’s relationship with partners and family members, including when the offender presents a risk of harm to children and others</p> <p>Where assessment shows the offender has family or parenting problems linked to their offending, staff will consider how planned interventions could address these</p> <p>Consider the impact on children when offender managers are planning or making home visits</p> <p>Planning and delivering offender programmes with consideration to the needs of children where appropriate</p> <p>Awareness of the impact on children when working with domestic violence (with perpetrators or victims) or sex offender perpetrators or survivors and strengthening the links with support agencies throughout</p> <p>Considering the impact of release arrangements (either bail or on licensed release) on any children in the household</p> <p>Considering the impact of the offender’s presence during any intervention or throughout the community sentence on any children in the household, including the effect of substance misuse</p> <p>Considering the impact on dependent children of the offender being in custody</p>	<p>Chief Officers of Probation</p>

2.7 The Offender Management Model encourages the sort of relationship between the offender and the offender manager which is likely to support the development of trust and disclosure of information. In turn, this can lead to better outcomes for children, providing there is support available in the community to meet the needs of children and offenders.

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>There are important points where offender managers must be alert, both to safeguarding and the well-being of children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at the pre-sentence stage where reports are required by the courts</li> <li>• at assessment stages and reviews throughout the sentence where signposting to services can be planned and reviewed</li> <li>• reviews of intervention (accredited offending behaviour programmes or activities such as learning and skills development), where the impact on families can form part of the success factors</li> <li>• assessments in preparation for parole decisions; and</li> <li>• where risk of causing serious harm requires Multi Agency Public Protection management</li> </ul>	<p>Chief Officers of Probation</p>
<p>Equally, probation areas need to ensure their communication protocols with both children and adult services can support these organisations in referring children and families to other services</p> <p>The offender manager should help offenders access community services needed to ensure the well-being of their children</p>	<p>Chief Officers of Probation</p>

Probation Circular 22/05: [http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/document\\_library/Probation\\_Circulars/pc22-2005.pdf](http://npsintranet.probation.gsi.gov.uk/document_library/Probation_Circulars/pc22-2005.pdf) provides an overview of the Act, including the need for each probation board to work with local authorities and other relevant partners, such as the police, YOTs and PCTs to improve children’s well-being.

Guidance on the role of Probation in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under the Children Act is available at: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG-00042/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG-00042/) – pages 55–59).

**Role of services and agencies working with children, young people and families at key stages of the criminal justice system**

2.8 The following table identifies tasks at key stages in the criminal justice process, but it is not intended that a response should be confined within stages, where an end-to-end approach would clearly produce better outcomes:

### When an arrest is made

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Local protocols to mitigate the effect on children when an arrest is made and they are in attendance, including arrangements to ensure the care of dependent children and how support for children and families can be accessed if needed. This should include advance liaison when it is known children are likely to be in the house when an arrest is made</p> <p><i>Local Criminal Justice Boards may wish to check that local protocols are in place in their areas</i></p>	<p>Chief Officers of Police</p> <p>LSCBs</p> <p>Local Authorities</p>

### When a criminal prosecution is proceeding

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Up-to-date information at courts and in the community signposting families of the defendant to key services which can help them with urgent issues like housing, benefits, drugs, childcare and specialist support</p>	<p>NOMS – working with HM Courts Service</p>
<p>Information about the Prisoners Families National Helpline and the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme to be displayed prominently in court, other criminal justice settings, and in community organisations where families may look for help</p>	<p>NOMS – working with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prison Governors</li> <li>• Legal Services Commission</li> <li>• Local Criminal Justice Boards</li> <li>• Local Authorities Services</li> <li>• Jobcentre Plus</li> <li>• Drug Action Teams</li> <li>• Youth offending Teams</li> <li>• PCTs/LHBs</li> </ul>
<p>The needs of dependent children to be identified in the PSR and other relevant reports where linked to offending or risk to ensure the issue can be drawn to the attention of sentencers</p>	<p>Chief Officers of Probation</p>

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>There is a local protocol in place to ensure there is early multi-agency action in cases where the imposition of a custodial sentence is likely for a parent who is a <b>sole carer</b>, to ensure the well-being and safeguarding of the children involved</p> <p><i>Local Criminal Justice Boards may wish to check that local protocols are in place in their areas</i></p>	LSCBs
<p>There is a local protocol in place to ensure no child could be placed at risk by the decision of a court to remand or send a sole carer to custody, in cases where no earlier arrangements have been made</p> <p>Escort Contractors should raise urgent child care issues with children's services immediately they are aware of them, record the incident and ensure the receiving prison is aware</p> <p><i>Local Criminal Justice Boards may wish to check that local protocols are in place in their areas</i></p>	LSCBs Prison Escort Contractors

### When a prisoner is received in custody

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Immediate attention should be paid to the caring responsibilities of prisoners, especially for women prisoners, and to include both elderly relatives and children</p> <p>During prisoner induction, assistance should be offered with any other serious or pressing family related needs e.g. any help they will need with drug/alcohol and health issues, housing, benefits or debt problems</p> <p>Prisoners are advised of their entitlement to a visit within 72 hours and that an early special 'compassionate' visit may be possible for the children of prisoners who are primary carers</p> <p>Timely information is provided for family and friends visiting, including details of how to find the prison and how to book visits</p>	Prison Governors



**During a custodial sentence**

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Prisoners are helped to communicate with their families, through telephone access; and help with letter writing	Prison Governors
<p>Subject to security category, allocation procedures include consideration of family ties and resettlement needs – including opportunities to take part in parenting/ relationship courses as part of the sentence or learning plan</p> <p>Links are made to children’s services when prisoners are completing parenting programmes</p>	Prison Governors
<p>Subject to safeguarding needs, prisoners should be assisted in every way possible to maintain family and community ties, and positive relationships with their children</p> <p>Prisons to seek to ensure that children have positive experiences when visiting or communicating with their parent in prison – by improving the quality of visits, including through family friendly visiting arrangements, and children and family days.</p> <p>Sure Start Children’s centres seek to develop links with their local prisons to support this aim</p>	Prison Governors Sure Start Children’s centres
To ensure that Foreign National Prisoners are able to make use of telephone calls and letters to keep in touch with their families abroad – and to provide advice and support to assist them in making arrangements for the care of dependants, especially women foreign nationals	Prison Governors
In cases where the offender is a PPO, there is liaison with the local PPO scheme, so that family support can be considered	Prison Governors
A proactive child protection policy in place within the prison, and staff are given training to support this	Prison Governors
Regular opportunities are provided for Looked-After Children to visit a parent in prison if they wish to in accordance with an agreed care plan for the child	Local Authorities

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Visits – a local strategy is in place to address the needs of families and children visiting</p> <p>There is an efficient system for booking visits in place</p> <p>The location used for visits is as relaxed and family friendly as possible</p>	<p>Prison Governors</p>
<p>Eligible families i.e. those on a qualifying income have assistance with the costs of travelling when visiting a close relative or partners</p> <p>Accurate information about the scheme is accessible to families, and they are signposted to assistance in completing the forms</p>	<p>NOMS – Assisted Prison Visits Unit</p>
<p>Where a need is identified, prisoners are offered help with life skills, including their relationship and parenting role to maintain family ties, and improve life chances for their children</p>	<p>Learning and Skills Council (due to be replaced from April 2010 by the Young People’s Learning Agency)</p> <p>Directors of Offender Management</p> <p>NOMS Lead Providers</p>
<p>In appropriate cases, Offender Behaviour Programmes, such as the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme, are closely linked to support for families</p>	<p>Offender Manager</p>
<p>Ensure that sentence planning – using OASys, and linked to induction work with the prisoner, includes a focus on maintaining family ties where appropriate</p> <p>Where possible, ensure families are engaged in planning for resettlement</p>	<p>Offender Managers</p> <p>Prison Governors</p>
<p>The needs of offenders’ children and families are taken into account in a temporary release licence or Home Detention curfew</p>	<p>Prison Governors</p> <p>Offender Managers</p>

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Local partnerships ensure that information, advice and support is available for the children and families of offenders – either by providing services, sign-posting or referrals to specialist services</p> <p>Local information sharing protocols are developed to support this</p> <p>Grandparents and others relatives caring for children on a temporary basis can access advice and guidance about their role as temporary carers</p>	Local Partnerships
<p>Prison visitor centres are able to provide basic advice and support services for families of offenders, with sign-posting or referrals to specialist services</p> <p>Prisons to consider the separate guidance in the resource pack for this Framework covering standards for Visitor Centres</p>	Prison Visitor centres Prison Governors
<p>Provision of public transport to enable visitors to reach prison establishments during visiting times</p> <p>Visiting times to take account of local transport links</p>	Local Transport providers Prison Governors

### Where offenders are serving sentences in the community

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
<p>Where an offending related need is identified, and resources are available, offenders are offered help with life skills, including with their relationships and parenting roles</p>	Chief Officers of Probation Learning and Skills Council Local Authorities
<p>In appropriate cases, Offending Behaviour Programmes, such as the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme, are closely linked to support for families</p>	Offender Manager

**Role of services and agencies to meet the specific needs of women offenders and their families**

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Up to date information about local women’s prisons is available at court	NOMS
Women offenders are able to access support and advice to help them manage family concerns, particularly around their children	Prison Governors Offender Managers Local Authorities
They are able to make a telephone call on reception into prison to resolve urgent family and child care issues	Prison Governors
If women prisoners have children, a prison location as close to home as possible is arranged	Prison Service
Child centred prison visits are regularly available Other visits are arranged with the needs of children in mind Unless on closed visits, women are allowed to embrace their children and to hold small children on their laps	Prison Governors
An assessment of the family needs is made where their children are being cared for by extended family, friends or in the looked after system	Local Authorities
Children’s services are informed when a prisoner is due to leave a Mother and Baby Unit	Prison Governors
Local children’s centres prioritise women offenders and their children for support Women are referred to Sure Start Children’s Centres on release from prison	Sure Start Children’s centres Prison Governors
Opportunities are provided for women offenders to develop life skills, both in custody and the community, which includes help to improve relationships and parenting, and link them to family learning schemes	Learning and Skills Councils Local Authorities Offender Managers
Support is available for women offenders who disclose that they are in an abusive or violent relationship	Local Authorities Prison Governors Offender Managers

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Service providers work together to develop protocols to ensure successful re-uniting of women ex-prisoners and their children, where this is in the child's interest	Local Authorities Chief Officers of Probation Prison Governors

### Quality required to support these tasks

Tasks	Lead organisations responsible
Accurate and timely information on services is provided to meet the needs of children and families of offenders	Service commissioners
Organisations have a complaints system that is friendly and accessible to offenders, children and families	Service commissioners
Organisations provide inclusive services – and where appropriate, targeted services, for children with a parent in prison	Service commissioners
All staff understand their responsibilities under the Children Act	Service commissioners
All staff who work with offenders' children receive awareness training and appropriate CRB checks	Service commissioners

### 3. Why we need this framework

#### Vision

Strong national, regional and local partnerships are in place and working together on the *Every Child Matters* and Reducing Re-offending agendas.

#### Reducing re-offending

- 3.1 Crime causes real harm to individuals, to communities and to the economy, and we need to work together to reduce re-offending. Family relationships are a factor in whether an offender will go on to commit further crime and a strong family relationship can help offenders make and sustain the changes needed to turn away from crime.
- 3.2 In a small number of cases maintaining family ties may not be appropriate, possibly because relationships have irreversibly broken down or because the offender presents a risk to family members. Safeguarding children and supporting victims of violence will always be our highest priority.
- 3.3 Overall ex-prisoners who are visited by a family member have a significantly lower re-offending rate: the odds are 39 per cent higher that they will re-offend within a year if they have received no visits.<sup>2</sup> Prisoners with family ties are far more likely to report having both housing and a job to go to on release, thus reducing the problems which housing, employment and other services face when working with them in the community.
- 3.4 Hence working with families to reduce re-offending could represent huge savings for society – on the crime front alone, the cost to the CJS in re-offending is at least £11bn a year and there are wider costs for communities and society as a whole. There are also the longer-term costs associated with health, family breakdown, poor child outcomes and inter-generational offending.

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<sup>2</sup> Factor linked to re-offending: a one year follow-up of prisoners who took part in the Resettlement Surveys 2001, 2003, 2004, Research Summary 5 2008



### **Children and families of offenders**

- 3.5 Offenders' families are amongst the most socially excluded groups in society. Some are assumed to be 'guilty by association', and many suffer stress related conditions – almost three-quarters of partners and mothers in one survey attributed their health problems directly to the imprisonment of a family member. Almost 60 per cent of families in another survey stated imprisonment of a family member had left them 'less well-off'.

### **Achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes**

- 3.6 It is estimated that around 160,000 children have a parent in prison each year. They are a vulnerable group at risk of poor outcomes, three times more likely to have mental health problems or to engage in anti-social behaviour than their peers. Nearly two thirds of boys who have a parent in prison will go on to commit some kind of crime themselves.
- 3.7 In addition, the Probation Service works with over 199,000 new offenders in the community each year. Little data is available about their problems, but similar issues are likely to be relevant to them.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Ministry of Justice carried out a joint priority review on the children of offenders in 2007. The aim was threefold:

- to examine evidence of the extent to which children who have a parent in prison have poorer outcomes;
- to generate recommendations to ensure existing systems effectively support this group; and
- to increase awareness of this high risk and vulnerable group, enabling their needs to be met more effectively.

The key findings were:

- Children of prisoners are at risk of poorer outcomes.
- They represent a large vulnerable group (over 160,000 children affected each year, 2.5 times the number of children in care) but they are invisible: most services who would be in contact with the child (e.g. Sure Start Children's Centres, schools) are unaware of the family circumstances unless informed directly by the family.
- Local authorities have no picture of demand in their area, and support nationally is patchy and fragmented.
- Local authorities and schools who were consulted were unanimously of the view that with better information they could, with due sensitivity, do very much better by these children.
- Parental imprisonment is a good trigger for reviewing these children's circumstances: a timely opportunity to identify children at risk of poor outcomes and to offer support to the family and children, to mitigate the effects of both parental imprisonment and family circumstance.

For further information see: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_exclusion\\_task\\_force/families\\_at\\_risk/review\\_analysis.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk/review_analysis.aspx)

- 3.8 This work underlines the fact that many children of offenders have complex needs and that support for them is fragmented. Partnership working can overcome these barriers recognising that parental imprisonment is a valuable opportunity to identify children at risk of poor outcomes and to offer them support.

## 4. Implementing the framework: Government policy and practice examples

### Integrated working: a co-ordinated, multi-agency approach

#### What we said we would do:

"We need to make sure that social and family links are at the heart of offender management."<sup>3</sup>

"We also need to continue improving support to families in which problematic circumstances and behaviour among parents increase the social exclusion faced by their children. This includes families in which parents are offenders (which increases the risk of offending by their children), who have mental health problems or misuse drugs."<sup>4</sup>

"There is a lack of targeted parenting support for groups who we know might benefit, such as parents who are offenders, prisoners, or drug users. We need to do more to help parents manage challenging behaviour and we will bring forward proposals to this end."<sup>5</sup>

### Reducing Re-offending Children and Families Pathway

4.1 In 2004 and 2005, the Government published Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plans, recognising that NOMS and the Criminal Justice System needed the support of a wide range of organisations and local communities to tackle re-offending, and supported them by establishing three alliances and seven pathways to address the key social factors which the Social Exclusion Unit found were linked to re-offending. This includes a pathway for the children and families of offenders, which has the following cross-government aims:

- maintaining family relationships to help prevent re-offending
- encouraging the inclusion of life skills, including parenting and relationship skills, within mainstream support for offenders
- engaging the Third Sector and faith communities in supporting children and families of offenders
- developing better material and advice and guidance for children and families of offenders
- developing a strategic regional response to this pathway
- ensuring that the interests of children and families of offenders are considered with the implementation of *Every Child Matters*

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<sup>3</sup> Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending 2006

<sup>4</sup> Strong and Prosperous Communities – Local Government White Paper 2006

<sup>5</sup> The Children's Plan : Building brighter futures 2007

- recognising that prolific and other priority offenders are often those with the most challenging lifestyles who require additional help to maintain their family ties.
- 4.2 The establishment of a pathway provided opportunities for partners to come together at regional levels to agree their strategies and plans. Pathway groups exist in the nine English regions, and many are led by or work in partnership with the Third Sector. Regions are seeking to develop a stronger focus for working with families in the community, either through specialist family services or better links to mainstream services for this group.
- 4.3 Prisons have identified a pathway lead to take forward the children and families agenda, and the changes to NOMS to improve joined-up frontline delivery in prisons and probation should allow us to provide better support for this role. A lot of progress has been made in prisons, especially around visiting arrangements for children, working in close partnership with the voluntary and community sector. Most prisons have a visitor centre outside the gate, which aims to improve the visiting experience and provide information and support for visitors. All privately-run and newly built prisons are required to have one and to meet standards for visiting and other arrangements. There are over 100 play areas for children in visits halls, and many prisons are working in partnership to run children and family days inside prisons.
- 4.4 It is increasingly clear that offenders' families need to access support outside the criminal justice system including through Primary Care, Home Start, Sure Start Children's Centres, Solicitors, Housing and Financial Advice Services, Schools, Youth Services, Adult Social Services and Children's Services.
- 4.5 Joint working between these services and the agencies of the criminal justice can be underpinned by Local Area Agreements. Children's Trust partners need to ensure that local services are available and configured to support the children and families of offenders through effective commissioning by:
- carrying out a needs assessment to understand local needs, resources and priorities
  - planning sustainable and diverse services to improve outcomes for these families
  - developing and managing the market in services that can best be configured to meet needs
  - procuring and developing services based on the plan
  - monitoring service delivery of outcomes and taking remedial action if necessary.

The Commissioning Support Programme ([www.commissioningsupport.org.uk](http://www.commissioningsupport.org.uk)) offers Children's Trusts advice and support on how to commission effectively.

- 4.6 The delivery chain for much of this work is complex but local partners have been making real progress in overcoming the barriers.

### **Families Do Matter**

In the West Midlands, a £2m pathfinder, funded by NOMS and HM Treasury from 2006/7–2008/9 under its Invest-To-Save Budget, aimed to provide evidence of the longer-term impact and benefit of supporting offenders to maintain and strengthen their relationships with their children and families. The project worked with West Midlands prisons to improve the delivery of children and family services within establishments. It also worked with local authorities and other organisations to create partnerships which promote the needs of offenders' families.

The DCSF and NOMS are providing funding for a further year to test and develop the model of effective identification and referral of offenders' families to community based service providers in a further two regions. Training is delivered to the children's workforce to raise awareness of the needs of children of offenders and partnerships with probation, prisons, schools are fostered. The project is utilising the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as a core plank of this strategy, and linking into the Every Child Matters outcomes.

### **Offender Parenting Programme**

Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Trust has established a parenting programme, with the aim of improving the parenting and care giving skills of offenders with children and focusing on improving family relationships as an important factor in reducing re-offending.

The programme aims to engage male offenders in the parenting programme by addressing their specific needs. It is to run over 13 three-hour long sessions, offering practical guidance on how to raise children in a positive environment, with sensible boundaries and discipline, care and responsibility. Participants are given exercises as homework, including appropriate methods of disciplining their children.

The course aims to build the self esteem of the individual, giving them a sense of responsibility to society, with an important role to play in the future of the next generation.

Tommy one of the offenders who completed the course found that it broadened his outlook on what it really means to be a father, and gave him skills he could use to prevent his children following the same path.

### **Thames Valley Partnerships – working with probation in Banbury**

The Family Matters programme has worked closely with the Probation Service in Banbury to establish a multi-agency network – where local ‘champions’ of the children and families of offenders (health visitors, social workers, offender managers, behaviour support teachers, and children’s centre managers) are better informed about the needs of this group and better linked with their local fellow professionals. Through this process gaps in services, knowledge and provision are becoming clearer.

The Banbury network has begun to identify a small number of offenders’ families who present the greatest risks to work with on a multi-agency basis. The outcomes in these cases have included:

- better compliance with the Probation Service in meeting programme requirements
- removal of child from the child protection register following progress
- introduction of families to Children’s Centre support services; and
- prison visits to jointly plan for release.

The programme has also helped clarify the role of the Probation Service as a linking, referral and signposting agency and how this multi-agency approach to families might fit with the principles and developing practice of offender management.

### **Support for families at risk and ‘Think Family’ approach**

#### **Vision**

Securing better outcomes for children, young people and families with additional needs by co-ordinating the support they receive from children, adult and family services.

4.7 ‘Think Family’ can be seen as a general approach to building the family dimension into everything we do. It also refers to a specific set of reforms initiated following the analysis done by the Social Exclusion Task Force which found families experiencing multiple and inter-generational disadvantage were not being helped despite a high level of public resource because it was poorly planned and co-ordinated or ineffective.

4.8 Excellent children’s services and excellent adults’ services are not enough in isolation: a vital part of ‘Think Family’ practices are the steps taken by children’s, young people’s and adult services to identify family needs which extend beyond the individual they are supporting, and in doing so reduce the number of families who need intensive support in the future. ‘Think Family’ services:



- Identify families at risk to provide support at the earliest opportunity;
- Meet the full range of needs within each family they are supporting or working with;
- Develop services which can respond effectively to the most challenging families; and
- Strengthen the ability of family members to provide care and support to each other.

4.9 There are two specific commitments within 'Think Family' for MoJ and DCSF relating to offenders' families:

- to explore ways in which NOMS and children's services can systematically assess and meet a child's needs when a parent goes to prison; and
- to set clear and achievable expectations of offender managers and local partners to improve support for these families facing social exclusion.

4.10 'Think Family' practice and philosophy means helping parents/families secure better outcomes for their children through more effective and better co-ordinated interventions by adults, young people's and children's services. Targeted 'Think Family' services lead to more systematic contact with the families involved. One consequence of this close involvement, which in many cases means visiting the home frequently, is that children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, harm can be identified and safeguarded earlier than might have otherwise occurred. Where there are concerns about the welfare of a child or children in the household the processes set out in the Government's guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' should be followed.

### **National roll out of 'Think family'**

4.11 Commitments in the recent Youth Crime Action Plan and The Children's Plan 'One Year On' mean that from April 2009 all local authorities are receiving extra funding via a ring fenced Think Family grant from DCSF to enable local authorities to:

- Provide a Parenting Early Intervention Programmes (PEIP)
- Continue to fund Parenting Experts and practitioners in all authorities
- Implement 'Think Family' reforms to local authority and health service systems and services
- Set up Youth Crime Family Intervention Projects (FIPs).

4.12 The Parenting Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) aims to improve parenting skills through increasing the delivery of evidence-based parenting programmes to parents 8–13 year olds at risk of negative outcomes.

- 4.13 DCSF funds the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners to develop the skills of the children's workforce to deliver parenting interventions (see [www.parentingacademy.org](http://www.parentingacademy.org)). Local links to this work can be made via the Local Authority's Parenting Commissioner and local Parenting Strategy.
- 4.14 Local authorities' plans for implementing 'Think Family' reforms vary according to local need, but some common themes include joint planning and commissioning across agencies, information sharing and multi-agency working, assessing the whole family and developing family support plans. Many areas have appointed 'Think Family' champions.
- 4.15 Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) provide intensive support to vulnerable families. FIPs offer support through multi-agency whole family support plans backed up by assertive working methods and the possibility of sanctions such as eviction, to ensure that families engage. Accredited parenting programmes are delivered and services (such as health) are brought in and coordinated around the family. Evidence shows the FIPs are successful in turning around the lives of the most challenging families whom other services have often written off.
- 4.16 The FIP model was based on a number of projects developed by Action for Children and expanded as part of the Government's Respect programme to target families involved in persistent anti-social behaviour. It is now being applied to other groups of vulnerable families. The new funding is intended to allow local authorities to target families experiencing multiple problems known to be linked to future risk of offending where it might make the most difference.

Further guidance on Think Family programme can be found at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/parents/ID91askclient/thinkfamily/tf/>

### **Youth Crime Action Plan Family Intervention Project**

HMP Hull is a category B community and local prison holding remand, sentenced and convicted adult males and young offenders. Approximately 80% of the prison population have a local address (within approx 50 miles of the prison.) The staff identified one of their main concerns as men on short sentences who go on to re-offend and return to prison for another short sentence. The prison governor is very keen to work with families and look at support beyond incarceration.

The prison has provided a building to be used as an Offender and Family Resource Centre where the FIP will be based along with a range of services such as Drug and Alcohol Advice and Support Services and housing advice, employment and skills advice. The centre will be used to deliver family friendly services; develop support pre-release and undertake discharge planning and link to support services. The prison has successfully bid for funding to employ link workers to support men who have just been released and they will work closely with the FIP. The FIP is working with families of offenders who are serving a sentence of 12 months or less. It is envisaged that most of the referrals will come from early contact with the criminal justice system and the first referrals have all come from probation. The FIP will work with families throughout the criminal justice process, while a parent is in prison and also when the prisoner is released.

### **Gloucestershire County Council – parent in prison policy**

The policy aims to raise awareness of the needs of children and young people with a parent or family member in prison; secure their education achievement and attendance; and promote social inclusion. Action includes:

- involving parents, carers and others to support the education of this group – within confidentiality protocols
- named person in each school responsible for this group
- named LA support for school
- information and guidance for schools
- training for named teachers in this role
- schools provide basic information to LA
- joint work between LA and Gloucester prison to support a child in difficulties

Key partners include the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, Adult Continuing Education and Training, Looked After Children Services, Connexions, and YOTs.

## Alcohol and Substance misuse

- 4.17 Work is also underway to support the families and children of drug and alcohol misusing offenders, based on growing evidence that supporting them can help offenders in breaking the cycle of drug misuse and recognising the *Hidden Harm*<sup>6</sup> that drug and alcohol misuse by parents can cause their children.

### ADFAM

ADFAM is a national charity working with and for families affected by drugs and alcohol misuse.

Partnership work with the NOMS Drugs Strategy Team includes:

- The ADFAM good practice Toolkit for engaging and involving families of substance misusers in custody – which is also relevant to those providing support services for prisoners' families in a community setting;
- Booklets aimed at both substance misusers and their families; and
- Training videos and courses for prison drug treatment staff for involving families of drug misusers in prison.

ADFAM workers are based in HMP Holloway, HMP Brixton and at HMP Peterborough providing a service to drug using prisoners and their families and linking up with drug workers inside and outside of the prison.

- 4.18 There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that by engaging and supporting carers outcomes for drug misusers can be improved. Family involvement can help drug misusers at all stages of their treatment journey by increasing the willingness of drug users to engage with services, improve retention and lead to more positive outcomes both drug-related and social. There is also evidence to suggest that if family members receive support this can often benefit the family as a whole and improve their overall outcomes.

- 4.19 The Government's 2008 drug strategy<sup>7</sup> includes a strong focus on families, addressing the needs of parents and children as individuals, as well as working with whole families to prevent drug use, reduce risk and get people into treatment. The new package for families includes:
- Ensuring drug-misusing parents have prompt access to treatment;
  - Encouraging family friendly treatment services; and
  - Supporting kin-carers, such as grandparents, who take on caring responsibilities for the children of substance misusing parents.

<sup>6</sup> Hidden Harm: Responding to the needs of children of problem drug users – Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

<sup>7</sup> Drugs: protecting families and communities, HM Government

- 4.20 In addition, building on previous consultation with families undertaken by the NOMS Drug Strategy Team and feedback from the National and Regional Carers Groups (2005), the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) commissioned the production of a report which sets out in more detail the experiences of families with a particular focus on their needs at arrest and on release and what might have helped at the time.
- 4.21 *Around Arrest and Beyond Release* (August 2007) highlighted a range of issues along with suggested actions needed to improve delivery. DIP then published *Around Arrest and Beyond Release 2 Moving Forward* (April 2009) which suggests some practical solutions for partnerships and service providers to assist planning and delivery of support for families of drug misusing offenders. DIP have also published an accompanying Fact Sheet *Meeting Family Needs – at arrest and after release* (April 2009) which summarises the learning from both reports.

### **Family learning**

- 4.22 Family learning programmes offer activities that families can do together and which can provide the basis for further learning at home or in prison. Programmes provide common territory and something that parents can do with children that is positive, enabling adults and children to learn together. Family literacy, language and numeracy are also important because so many offenders have these needs. The Learning and Skills Council is helping to support offenders to maintain family ties through family programmes and socially excluded families are a priority for these interventions.
- 4.23 The Family Learning Impact Fund aims to further develop existing family learning provision (Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy and Wider Family Learning) funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It commits £30m additional funding from DCSF to BIS over the three years 2008-11. There are six key strands of work to extend and engage more hard-to-reach families, families at risk and fathers. Programmes are available locally in a variety of settings including Sure Start Children's Centres, extended schools, community and voluntary settings, health centres, museums and libraries.

Further information about family learning programmes can be found at: <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/> and the Campaign For Learning: <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/index.asp> or contact your local authority.

### **Lincolnshire County Council Libraries and Learning Service**

The *Reading Together* project aims to encourage men in Lincoln prison to maintain links with their children through reading and sharing books. Prisoners choose books in the library to work on with their children. A duplicate copy of the book is sent to the family's local library. Fathers and children exchange letters about the book, with help from the prison's Writer in Residence and the project team. The team use creative writing, storytelling and drama to encourage prisoners and their families to venture into reading and writing. Prisoners learn about how children read and write and how they can support the process. Support is also offered to the mother and child in the community through their local library.

### **Community Justice**

- 4.24 Offenders and their families often face exclusion when trying to access financial services such as bank accounts insurance and mortgages. NOMS/ FSA guidance ([http://www.fsa.gov.uk/financial\\_capability/pdfs/signposting.pdf](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/financial_capability/pdfs/signposting.pdf)) is available on signposting offenders to financial capability training, debt advice and financial services. The guidance highlights the need to work with their families and to assist in signposting them to organisations that can help.

### **Rethink – Community Advice and Support Service in Cornwall**

Aims to reduce low risk offending by helping offenders and their families gain access to community support through the provision of an advice desk at court. It provides assistance for the families of prisoners at the point of sentence so that they understand more about the prison system and are better able to keep in touch. It also aims to reduce stress and anxiety and negate the economic impact of imprisonment on families through information and signposting the family to appropriate sources of support to address money management, debt, welfare rights, housing, employment, childcare and other needs.

### **Working with women offenders and their families**

- 4.25 We know that a high number of female offenders have multiple, complex needs, including substance misuse, mental health problems, homelessness, poor skills, financial hardship and a history of abuse. The 2003 Resettlement Survey showed that half of all women prisoners had dependent children and step children under 18.

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- 4.26 Although most women prisoners will spend only a short time in custody, this will often result in loss of accommodation, weakening of family ties and stigmatisation. Having a mother in prison adversely affects the life chances of their children, increasing the likelihood that they will go on to offend.

Working together to meet the needs of a woman or a family does not affect the over-riding duty of all agencies including those working with adults to notify children's services when they believe a child may be at risk in line with local safeguarding policies and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006).

- 4.27 A recent Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force and Ministry of Justice study into women offenders looked at how to improve the life chances of women offenders, women at risk of offending, and their families, whilst ensuring the Government meets the public's need for justice and protection. The study focused on two core strands: preventing women from offending; and making effective and appropriate use of alternatives to custody. It found that while women represent only five per cent of the total prison population, they represent the acute end of a wider group of socially excluded women and girls in the community who exhibit a similarly complex set of needs and experience high levels of disadvantage. As well as bringing together existing data and new analysis on women offenders, the report evidences the complexity of women offenders' needs, and highlights that there may be great value in complementing existing provision with earlier, intensive and tailored support.

Further information on the study can be found at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/209663/setf\\_shortstudy\\_womenoffenders.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/209663/setf_shortstudy_womenoffenders.pdf)

- 4.28 Prison Service Order 4800 introduces gender specific standards to ensure the needs of women offenders are addressed across the estate. These standards take into account that women offenders are likely to have experienced somatic violence or sexual abuse, mental health problems and self-harming, which will affect them both in custody and on release. The PSO highlights the following issues for women and their families:
- They should be given support and information to assist them in understanding the effects of their imprisonment on their separated children, how to tell their children of their imprisonment and how to support them.
  - They are likely to try to run their families from inside prison, and there should be trained family support officers/workers in each prison who understand how children's services and care proceedings work and are able to offer appropriate support for women and link with external agencies. Good communication between family services is important to avoid confusion and duplication of effort.

- They receive fewer visits than male prisoners. This may partly reflect the distance many are from home. BME women may receive disproportionately even fewer visits.
  - All women's prisons should have a well run and well-maintained visitors' centre in which the visitor can feel welcome and supported before and after the visit.
  - There should be staff or volunteers to support visitors in the visitors' centre – not just to process the visit or search property. There should be a safe play area for children in the visitors' centre and visits room staffed by trained workers with age appropriate toys.
  - Unless women are on closed visits they should be allowed to hug their family and hold young children on their lap during the visit. Prisons should also avoid limiting the number of a woman's children who can visit at a time.
  - Staff particularly those working on visits need a good understanding of safeguarding children.
  - All women's prisons should run special children's visits at least 4 times a year. Women and children need to be supported before, during and after the visit. Visits staff should be trained in understanding the effects of imprisonment on the children of prisoners and how to help them have the best visit. Advice and best practice should be sought when special children's visits are arranged.
- 4.29 The Third Sector work needs to be well facilitated by management, appropriately supported and understood by the whole establishment. Mothers about to be released should be linked with services such as Sure Start Children's Centres who can offer support.
- 4.30 The Government is committed to looking specifically at how to tackle women's offending and addressing the adverse impact of imprisonment on women and their families. This includes investment of £15.6m over two years to build capacity of one-stop-shop services and to further develop bail support services to better meet the needs of women and their children. These provide a range of services from accommodation to employment and are a good example of how to provide services for women in one place: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/announcement030209a.htm>
- 4.31 Services can help tackle the social exclusion faced by women offenders and their children by:
- recognising that women will not engage successfully with interventions that do not recognise their specific needs or enable them to manage their child care responsibilities, especially in cases where they are the primary carer;

- developing strong local partnerships to ensure women offenders can access mainstream support and advice to help them manage family concerns, including support from universal services;
- undertaking an assessment of family need, including where the children of women offenders are being cared for by extended family or friends, in partnership with local authority children's services;
- recognising that some women offenders will need support to break away from partners, ex-partners or family members who are violent, abusive or are reinforcing their offending behaviour, and that they are likely to require on-going support from expert women's centres; and
- recognising that some women will also need support to build a new life away from prostitution, and help with building a positive self-image to develop skills to access employment opportunities.

Further information can be found on commissioning specific services for women offenders and their families at: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/>

### **Working with BME offenders and their families**

4.32 Research shows that black and minority ethnic (BME) groups make up 26% of the prison population, though they only constitute 9% of the overall population in England and Wales. Similar disproportional patterns appear at all stages in the criminal justice system. They are more likely to be stopped and searched, more likely to be arrested, less likely to be cautioned, more likely to be prosecuted, and more likely to receive a longer prison sentence. For the families of BME offenders, this reality can increase their economic vulnerability and contribute to their social exclusion. This over-representation and an expectation that they will be discriminated against by Criminal Justice agencies, means that offenders and their families may prefer to approach the Third Sector for support in overcoming their problems, especially where they are culturally sensitive services.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Pecan**

Funded through the NOMS small grants programme until 2010, Pecan is working with black and minority ethnic offenders and their families in London and the Eastern Region. Key to their work with families is ensuring that parents, partners and siblings understand how services are working with the offender. Pecan staff and volunteers develop action plans for families based on their needs.

The main benefit of this work is to strengthen the family unit and reduce the risk of re-offending. It also helps the offender to think about what their family may be going through and not just to focus on themselves.

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<sup>8</sup> Everyone's Business : Investigating the resettlement needs of Black and minority ethnic ex-offenders in the West Midlands

## Youth justice services

- 4.33 Family relationships and the home environment are key contributory factors to the risk of a young person offending. Youth offending teams' work with parents and carers of young people who offend, or who are at risk of offending, is therefore critical. Parenting interventions can give parents the skills to parent authoritatively and effectively and are vital in addressing youth crime.
- 4.34 The Youth Justice Board's evaluation of 42 pilot parenting programmes, "Positive Parenting", showed that parents and carers attending the programmes improved their communications skills, monitoring and supervision, ability to handle conflict and relationships, and generally felt more confident as parents. Further information about effective practice in parenting can be found on the website for the Youth Justice Board at [www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/prevention/parenting](http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/prevention/parenting)
- 4.35 As part of implementation of the Youth Crime Action Plan, the Government is committed to increasing the quality of support given to parents/carers. While this support should be offered voluntarily as a first step, assertive approaches will be used to ensure all those who need support receive it, including the use of Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders where necessary.

## Working with the Third Sector

### Vision

We achieve a diverse Third Sector, working with offenders' families and helping us make the case for investing in these families as part of a wider agenda to tackle social exclusion

- 4.36 The Government sees a thriving and diverse Third Sector to be at the heart of a successful modern democracy and the provision of quality public services. It is committed to the sector and the State working together to bring about real change. There is work to be done at the centre, in the regions and locally to develop our engagement with the third sector to enhance its contribution, including shaping and delivering services, identifying effective schemes delivered by the third sector and how they can be scaled up.

- 4.37 The Offender Management Act 2007 clarified that the commissioning of probation services will in the main take place at local level. Following the Act and the second review of prisons by Lord Carter we are looking again at our commissioning system and strategy within a Best Value Framework for probation. The focus on best value and local commissioning by prisons and probation means that decisions can be made in local partnerships, in line with meeting local needs, and commissioned from the best available provider.
- 4.38 The MoJ and NOMS Third Sector Action Plan *Working with the Third Sector to reduce re-offending 2008–11* sets out actions for strengthening the role of the sector – as campaigners, advocates of service users and communities, partners in planning, service providers and enablers of volunteering and mentoring. The key commitments include:
- Increasing compliance with the Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector on funding, procurement, consultation and partnership working;
  - Transforming services and reviewing and refocusing work and resources on agreed priorities;
  - Selecting best providers and creating a 'fairer playing field';
  - Strengthening joint-commissioning and using grant funding where this better delivers outcomes; and
  - Working in partnership to strengthen the evidence base and to agree and demonstrate outcomes.
- 4.39 The new investment to support the plan (£2.2m over three years for national Third Sector infrastructure supporting frontline organisations working with offenders and their families, including £400k over two years in a local demonstration project on cross-sector multi-agency working) will focus on better engaging small and diverse local organisations and overcoming barriers to their involvement in service design and delivery. This includes £155k to enable Action For Prisoners Families to help build capacity within the Children and Families Pathway: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/noms-third-sector-cons-response.pdf>
- 4.40 We have also included new criteria in the £8m p/a Parenting Fund to allow bids from local Third Sector projects to "support families of offenders to improve the life chances of their children": <http://www.parentingfund.org/>

## 5. New opportunities in delivery

### **Vision**

There is greater consistency in meeting the needs of offenders' families and there clear routes for them to be able to access support.

- 5.1 There are new opportunities to support this vision. The Government consultation paper 'Strategic Plan for Reducing Re-offending 2008–11: Working in partnership to reduce re-offending and make communities safer' provided an opportunity for partners across Government, in the regions, and in local communities to review progress to date. The responses demonstrated the need for:
- greater clarity about governance arrangements for overseeing reducing re-offending work;
  - better lines of communication between services delivered in custody and the community;
  - work across reducing re-offending pathways, a package of provision to address both the risk and needs of offenders that will help them stop offending; and
  - strengthening the case for investing in offenders, focusing on local partners' efforts on working with offenders and their families in order to achieve safer communities.
- 5.2 The Children and Families Pathway was identified by probation and other partners as a pathway requiring the most development, as the issue has often only been considered in the prison context. We will respond to this by:
- using this feedback to inform our continued work, our commitment to joint commissioning and partnerships and our approach to managing offenders;
  - at national level a new National Crime Reduction Board chaired by the Home Office providing strategic oversight of work to reduce re-offending and the Reducing Re-offending Inter Ministerial Group providing critical leverage at a Ministerial level with other Government departments;
  - the bringing together of prison and probation services under the NOMS Agency will help ensure continuity between prison and probation services;

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- the appointment of Directors of Offender Management in each of the English regions will promote partnership working and commissioning targeted at the specific needs of their regions. They will manage the regional partnerships, working with Government Offices and others to maximise pathway resources; and
  - setting out the key role of Probation Trusts in joint commissioning and partnership arrangements including expectations regarding this agenda.
- 5.3 To provide greater consistency in meeting the needs of offenders and their families, the National Offender Management Service is drawing up specifications for delivery of services to the children and families of offenders both in prison and the community. The Children and Families Pathway will therefore be the first pathway to have minimum standards of delivery set, reflecting the importance of this agenda.
- 5.4 Agencies should also be increasingly working towards the same key aims through the Public Service Agreements (PSAs) underpinned by the national indicators and targets identified in Local Area Agreements. This provides a real opportunity to put local delivery at the heart of the system to ensure that all partners are working on these priorities together. LAAs will be the delivery arm and the primary level through which local authorities and NOMS Probation Trusts/Areas can engage local partners to reduce re-offending, tackle social exclusion and prevent inter-generational offending.
- 5.5 The creation of the new probation trusts, introduced by the Offender Management Act 2007, provides an opportunity to commission, joint commission and work in partnership to reduce re-offending and improve outcomes for children. They will have a responsibility to promote the well-being of children under the Children Act 2004, are the lead provider of offender management, and will be responsible for commissioning and joint-commissioning of local services. This role is covered in guidance within the specifications for new trusts.
- 5.6 It is also important that we continue to use existing opportunities. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships are in a unique position to bring together and co-ordinate a range of partner agencies to support the reducing re-offending agenda supported by the Local Strategic Partnership. These issues can be even more prevalent in the case of prolific offenders who often have a higher level of need for support with their families and children because of their challenging lifestyles and complex needs; including the disruption that their offending background and histories can have on family life.

- 5.7 Some of these offenders receive invaluable support in maintaining family ties under the Prolific and other Priority Offenders Programme, and this can help to maximise positive outcomes and the success of other interventions while on the Programme. The proposals in the Policing and Crime Bill to include reducing re-offending as a specific responsibility for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships will help partners focus on this agenda: [www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk/police-reform/policegp/](http://www.police.homeoffice.gov.uk/police-reform/policegp/) and the six Integrated Offender Management pioneer areas (Avon & Somerset, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, London, West Yorkshire and West Midlands) provide an opportunity to engage offenders' families, where appropriate, in working with offenders who present the highest risks to their communities: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/communitySafety/673723/806419/>

#### **Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO): Hounslow**

In Hounslow a scheme has been established which aims to improve engagement and reduction of the prolific offender's drug use by also engaging their drug using partner. It provides them and their partner with a premium service into the Drugs Intervention Programme and on to treatment, including rapid prescribing and other benefits. This is to help increase the PPOs' engagement and retention in treatment and subsequently reduce their offending behaviour.

#### **Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO): Hillingdon**

The PPO Team in Hillingdon have provided several good examples of how the inclusion of an offender's family member has enhanced the experience of the PPO scheme for the individual. In one case involving two brothers there is now a clear and helpful two-way exchange of information between the family and the local PPO scheme. This provides support for the offenders in complying with the various requirements of their action plans and give PPO Team staff access to an additional source of information about various aspects of the offenders' behaviour.





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For enquiries about this Framework, or alternative format versions of this publication, please contact Vivien Brandon on 020 3334 2488 or by e-mail: [Vivien.Brandon1@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Vivien.Brandon1@justice.gsi.gov.uk)