

REPORT FOR SAFE GROUND

AN EVALUATION OF SUPPORTERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE REVISED 'FAMILY MAN' PROGRAMME DELIVERED IN BELMARSH, BIRMINGHAM, BRISTOL, HIGHPOINT AND WANDSWORTH PRISONS



Introduction

Between September 2008 and February 2009, the revised *Family Man (FM)* programme which included the participation supporters (i.e., relative, partner, close friend or volunteer) of prisoners (the latter hereafter referred to as students), was trialled in Belmarsh, Birmingham, Bristol, Highpoint, Wandsworth and Leeds prisons. During this period, two *FM* programmes were held in Belmarsh, one in Birmingham, two in Bristol, two in Highpoint, one in Wandsworth and one in Leeds. Although Leeds prison participated in the revised *FM trial*, the supporters involved could not be contacted as they had not signed the requisite disclaimers regarding follow-up interviews. The aim of this evaluation was to elicit qualitative feedback via a questionnaire administered during a telephone interview, from a random, yet representative selection of supporters (hereafter referred to as Respondents), who participated in these programmes, to assess the benefits, or otherwise, of supporter involvement.

1.1 The sample of supporters (hereafter referred to as Respondents)

A total of seventy Respondents participated in the eight *Family Man* programmes across the five prisons included in this report, all of whom had agreed to be contacted

for the purpose of feedback, following delivery of the *FM* programmes. Of the seventy Respondents, three had not provided telephone numbers; one telephone number was incorrect; calls were not being connected to two numbers, and one Respondent was said to be out of the country. Given the timescale for this research, it was agreed that a sample of one third of the remaining sixty three Respondents would provide a sufficiently representative sample for the purpose of this evaluation. All sixty three telephone numbers provided by the Family Support Workers involved in *FM* in the five prisons were contacted on more than one occasion in an endeavour to achieve the desired sample, thirty four of which were constantly in answerphone mode, despite attempts to connect at varying times during the day, evening and during weekends. As the invitation to participate in the research was made via the telephone, it was not appropriate, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the research, to leave messages about the research until the correct recipient could be established. Two of the telephone contacts included a Probation Officer and a Prison Officer who reportedly acted as supporters for two *FM* students. The Probation Officer indicated that permission would have to be sought from a Probation Line Manager for the Officer to participate in an interview – which at the time of writing is still awaited – and the Prison Officer returned to Wing duties and has not yet responded to the request, forwarded via one of his colleagues, for interview. In addition, interview appointments were made with six Respondents who failed to be available at the agreed times. All were re-contacted and four further appointments were offered to each, but at the time of writing, none have been available for re-scheduled interviews. Within the given timescale, it proved possible to contact twenty one Respondents, and their interview feedback is illustrated in the main body of this Report.

1.2 Breakdown of the sample of Respondents

The sample of Respondents interviewed comprised 7 mothers, 2 wives, 4 female partners, 2 fiancées, 3 girlfriends, 1 son, 1 brother, and 1 female friend. In terms of the ethnic origin of the sample, 11 Respondents described themselves and their related students as White British; 1 Respondent described herself as White British with a White Irish related student; 2 as English White with similar related students; 1 Respondent as Cypriot/Egyptian with an English/Jamaican related student; 1 Respondent and related student as Indian Caribbean; 1 Respondent and related student as Black British; 1 Respondent and related student as British Mixed Race; 2 Respondents and related students as Mixed Race-British White/African-Caribbean, and 1 Respondent and related student as African-Caribbean. The participant students had 21 children between them, some with the Respondents interviewed, and other children with other partners. Reportedly there were 9 daughters and 1 step-daughter, whose ages ranged from 22 months to 15 years, and 9 sons and 2 step-sons, whose ages ranged from 12 months to 13 years.

2. The Interview Questionnaire

The interview questionnaire comprised twelve questions which reflected Respondents' involvement in specific aspects of the *FM* programme. Factual information was gathered in relation to the Respondent's relationship with the student,

as was information concerning children within the relationship with the student, including children he may have with other partners. The ethnic origin of the student, the Respondent and children was recorded, and where the Respondent was willing to discuss this, the nature of the offence committed by the student and its relevance for the parties participating in the *FM* programme. Open-ended questions allowing for maximum Respondent expression, and two 'scaled' questions were devised to elicit Respondent feedback on specific areas of the *FM* programme such as the Supporters' Only session; the 'What Next' session; the Assessing Areas for Change/Family Action Plan session; the structured letter exchange, and the Presentation. Suggestions for improvement to the *FM* programme, and/or in the way that Safe Ground involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters were invited, as was an opportunity for Respondents to comment on anything about *FM* or Safe Ground that was not covered in the questionnaire. A copy of the Questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

3. Respondent Feedback

Set out below, under their respective prisons and *FM* programmes, are summaries of the feedback from the Respondents.

3.1 HMP Belmarsh - September 2008 Family Man Programme

Feedback was obtained from **two Respondents** who attended this programme - a mother and a female partner - whose relatives had been imprisoned for offences of violence and burglary. One of the students was released following the *FM* programme and went to live with his mother, but was subsequently recalled to prison following an incident with a girlfriend who had had a connection with his original offence (this factor is referred to in the mother's feedback). The other student is scheduled for release later in 2009. The student whose mother participated, had no children, and the student whose partner participated had a 3 year old daughter with her. One Respondent described her ethnic origin as British White, and the other as Mixed Race/Cypriot Egyptian.

It was the mother's first experience of a prison-based programme, rating her inclusion as extremely important, commenting: *'I think that when you are on the outside, it is very important to give the person inside support. Also, you are totally alienated from what is going on inside. It's very important when you get through the prison door to have someone who speaks to you and is open about what is going on.'*

From the partner's perspective, she and the student had participated in a two-day Relate Course prior to undertaking *FM* and she remarked as follows: *'I liked the Relate Course because the person who took it was a professional couple counsellor and helped us with our problems as a couple, and I liked the Family Man course because my daughter and I got the chance to spend the day with (student) as a family.'* This Respondent also rated inclusion as extremely important.

In terms of exploring **Respondents' motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, the mother felt it was important to support her son (student) on the following basis: *'Most parents will say that as your children get older you become more excluded from their lives, and only become included when there's a problem, so I thought it would be good to become more included in what was happening to (student).'*

The partner Respondent hoped that it may help to bring her partner (student) and herself closer together, as they had been apart for two years. She also hoped that **FM** might reinforce what the couple had learned from participation in the Relate Course. Equally, this Respondent felt that it was important for their daughter to be included, commenting: *'..as she doesn't know her father well enough really, and I thought this course might help us as a family.'* She also hoped that **FM** would encourage her partner (student) to realise that he had important responsibilities as a family man.

Respondents were asked if they had **any anxieties about participating in FM, or were surprised about anything in it**. The mother had no anxieties, but expressed surprise in the following terms:- *'I was surprised that some of the men doing the course were serving extremely long sentences and still had a lot of time to serve, whereas (student) was only on a short sentence. I was glad that they did things with the prisoners on a normal, human being level, even although they (prison staff) were in authority over them in the prison and had to lock them up afterwards.'*

The partner Respondent indicated that she had not understood what the course would be about in terms of its structure, before participating, although she said that her partner (student) had explained about it. She expressed the hope that: *'..it would meet my needs and expectations that it would help us as a family.'* She was surprised how relaxed the atmosphere was, comparing it very favourably with ordinary visits which she described as not very relaxed at all.

Respondents were then asked for their impressions of the sessions they attended.

In terms of the **Supporters Only** session, the mother found this session very supportive, summed up in her comment: *'Although we were all different and were supporting different relatives, we all had one thing in common – a relative in prison.'*

The partner Respondent also alluded to *'lots of people there, all at different levels'* and she recognised that the information about the course had to be disseminated to a group of people functioning at all levels of ability. However, from her personal perspective she commented: *'I found this session a bit childish, for example, telling us what a goal was, and things like that.'* This Respondent was also disappointed that relatives were not included in this session, remarking: *'I thought that the whole reason for doing the course was to do things with our partner, talk about and work on our problems together, so I was disappointed that our partners were not included on that first day. I think we should have been together all the way through the course.'*

A factor referred to by these two Respondents and mirrored in responses from other **FM** programmes, was that they felt some concern in relation to talking about

themselves, their relatives, and asking other people about their relatives in prison. The Respondent partner, in particular, lacked confidence about expressing herself in public, in personal terms, especially amongst people whom she did not know.

The **What Next** session was very highly rated by both Respondents, for its provision of helpful information and practical assistance, although the partner Respondent commented: *'I did find this session beneficial, but I think it could be improved if there was a wider range of agencies available, as not all of the agencies that were there on the day were relevant to (student) and myself, or for some of the other people on the course.'*

The mother Respondent found the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan Session** rather difficult, because of her role as a mother, which she illustrated as follows: *'I found it quite hard to do the scoring, because I'm (student's) Mum, and he can be quite an angry young man and difficult at home, so doesn't always see things the way I do. So, on some things our scores differed. I also think there are quite a lot of grey areas because of what has happened in the past. For example, I would like him to stay away from his former girlfriend, but it's difficult for me to say that to him because he must learn to do that for himself, learn to think before he acts and think about how his actions might affect others. But, this is difficult to communicate because I am his Mum and it's about him changing his behaviour. So, we concentrated mostly on what he could do in practical ways when he is released, such as obtaining work and maybe taking up a hobby to help him channel some of his negative energy.'*

The partner Respondent, on the other hand, commented: *'I did find this session quite exciting, seeing what both of us put down as problems. In terms of the scoring, (student) and I both know and agree about the problems in our relationship and what needs to be done about that.'* This Respondent, and reportedly her partner (student), felt that the assessment forms could have been worded more clearly and simply.

Neither of these Respondents recollected being given a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In terms of **the main benefits of involvement in FM**, the mother Respondent appreciated being able to share the experience with other relatives. According to her, her son (student) did not share very much information with her about the parts of the programme solely devoted to student participation, as he told her these were confidential, but she did feel that the programme had had a positive influence on him. They did exchange letters within the four structured letter arrangement. She described what occurred when her son (student) was released, as follows: *'When (student) came out of prison last November, and came home to me, initially he was very appreciative of what I had done - I'd decorated his room - and I thought he seemed more relaxed. But, then 'she' (girlfriend) came back on the scene again and I believe that she has contributed to him being back in Belmarsh. Once the girlfriend was back in touch, (student) began his mood swings again - good on the days when he felt she wanted him, then sad and angry when he felt she didn't want him. Mum, as usual, then becomes the butt of all his upset.'* As reported earlier, following an incident involving this girlfriend, the student was recalled to prison.

From the partner Respondent perspective, she was concerned about the point at which her partner participated in the *FM* programme, feeling that it was too early in his sentence, which made it difficult for him to put into action what he had learned. She expressed this in the following terms: *'Whilst it was good to be able to spend time together as a family on the last day, I don't think there is much point in doing this course unless it is kept going for the prisoners, so it can keep being reinforced. I think it would be much better if this course was done nearer the end of the sentence, so that (student) could come out and prove himself to me. It did change him and he wanted to prove things to me, but I think it wears off and I think with (student), it has worn off already! It is so difficult for both of us. I'm not sure what he has learned, as he hasn't been able to demonstrate this yet. I just have to wait for him to come out and prove himself –I've done a lot of waiting! I have not been able to praise him for his efforts in terms of what he has done since the course, as he is still in Prison and not had a chance to follow anything through yet.'*

In terms of **support**, although the mother Respondent indicated that she had good support from family and friends, she commented: *'I'm not really one for approaching agencies for help, although I was never offered any help by any agencies.'*

The partner Respondent indicated that she had family support, but found that the most difficult aspect of her partner's imprisonment was being apart from him for such a prolonged period.

In response to questions related to **what aspect of the sessions they thought had made the most impression on the student, and what had been pursued by the student following the programme**, the mother Respondent found this rather difficult to answer, as (student) had not shared much of what he had been doing on the programme. She did see two of his workbooks and was impressed with what she saw, as she indicated that (student) was diagnosed as dyslexic, and stated, when aged 10 years, not receiving appropriate help until he was 12 years of age. She said that although he listens and talks well, reading and writing are still not easy for him. Given this, she remarked: *'I think he did very well to cope with the course, because it seemed to involve an awful lot of work, and although he can't spell properly, he did write to me, and friends, and still does, which isn't easy for him. I think it did help him being in a group when he was doing the course.'* In terms of following through from the programme, her son did obtain employment when he was released, and sought his mother's assistance with the relevant paperwork in the process, which pleased her greatly. She commented: *'Normally he'd just expect me to deal with any paperwork on his behalf, but this time he sat down with me and we did the paperwork about the job together, which was good. His job was going well until he got arrested following the allegation (made by the girlfriend his mother had concerns about), which is a great pity, as he was doing all right until she came back into his life.'* One other notable factor this mother referred to was that her son was adamant that he wanted to develop a greater sense of responsibility when he was released, and he felt he could achieve this by becoming a dog owner – by being a responsible owner and having something that he could care about, look after, and which would care about him and be loyal in return - which he did until being recalled to prison. The

mother expressed some frustration that his success with the dog unfortunately had not translated into his wider relationship sphere.

The partner Respondent indicated that she had seen evidence of her partner's (student) portfolio work but she was uncertain as to what occurred in the student group. She reiterated that she was not sure what her partner (student) had really learned, as he has not yet been able to put it in force. She commented that in her view: *'...the best thing for both of us, for all of us, was the family day at the end.'* Although she remained uncertain about the degree of learning her partner (student) had absorbed from participating in *FM*, she did indicate that when courses had been available in the prisons where he had been, he had taken advantage of them. In terms of following through from *FM*, she reported: *'He's now in Birmingham, which is a long way away, so in terms of the rest of what he is planning to do, he can't follow that up until he gets out.'*

Respondents were asked **which part(s) of their involvement in the FM programme they found most useful, and which part(s), if any, they would improve.** They were also asked to rate the *FM* programme overall, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 was very poor, and 10 was excellent.

The mother Respondent attended all the sessions apart from the Presentation. This was because her son (student) was released the day before the Presentation. She found all the sessions she attended in the programme helpful, commenting: *'I think the most useful thing for me was the communication with other supporters and picking up on things whilst in that group. I am not personally a person who seeks out groups to join, as I tend to get on with things on my own – there's also a time element for me too, as I do several jobs, cleaning and helping out in a restaurant, so I spend a lot of time at work. It was very helpful to hear about the problems that other people have, as it makes you realise that some people are in a lot worse position, and I gained some perspective regarding that. It helps to be able to share and feel that you are not alone. I am a people watcher, and I got talking to a woman whose husband is doing an extremely long sentence. I watched them together and they really seemed to appreciate the opportunity to be together, and I thought how lovely it was for them to have that opportunity. I saw some relationships improve and people appreciated the time they were able to have together.'* This Respondent mother rated the *FM* programme overall as **10** (where 10=excellent).

The Respondent partner summarised her view as follows: *'I have to say that I didn't find the course very useful to me really. The only things I found good were the agencies session and being able to spend time with (student) as a partner, and as a family.'* She rated the *FM* programme overall as **7** (where 10=excellent).

Respondents were asked if they thought that there was **anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters.**

The mother Respondent formed the impression that the partners and wives who participated in the programme *'had a lot more dealings with the group than I did.'* She conjectured that this may have been because they had small children, and thus

needed it. She also suggested that extra support may have been given to supporters as a result of their relatives' (students) reactions on the programme. The implication here is that participant mothers have different, but equally important needs for help and support, as do partners with young children.

The partner responded to this question as follows: *'I find it difficult to express clearly, but I don't really think that the course achieves its purpose – or it didn't for me. Overall, I think the course is a good one and the guys (students) seemed happy about it, but I didn't feel that it was enough for me. When we did the Relate Course, we were working with a professional couple counsellor with specific skills concerning relationships between people, which she was able to pass on to us. With the FM course, it seemed to be run by Prison Officers, and although they were very nice people, I didn't feel that they were really 'professional' enough in their delivery of the course. I think that maybe a course like this should be delivered by people with professional knowledge and skill in working together with families.'*

Finally, Respondents were asked if there was **anything else they would like to say about FM or Safe Ground** that had not been covered earlier in the interview.

Both Respondents felt that involving relatives was of benefit to prisoners and their families, and there was a plea for the Prison Service to involve and work together much more with relatives, and people and agencies from outside prison.

3.2 HMP Belmarsh - January 2009 Family Man Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **four Respondents** who participated – a mother, a fiancée, a son and a brother. Their relatives were imprisoned for offences of manslaughter, violence, and drug-related offences. Two of the students anticipate being released in 2009, one in 2010 and one in 2011. One of the students had no children, one had a 3 year old daughter and a 4 year old step-son, one had three adult children (a son, who was a Respondent, and two daughters), and the remaining student, (whose brother was a Respondent), had an 8 year old daughter, a 4 year old son and a 12 month old son with three different partners. The Respondents described their ethnic origins as Mixed Race-British White/African-Caribbean, British White, Indian-Caribbean and African Caribbean.

For all of the Respondents, it was their first **experience of a prison-based programme**, and they all rated inclusion in *FM* as extremely important. All Respondents felt that it was important to support imprisoned relatives, to help to maintain and retain family relationship bonds. Three of the four felt it was important that those imprisoned should realise the collateral impact upon relatives, of their offending behaviour, which they expressed as follows: *'I think it is very important for (student) to know that I am going through the same thing as him. I feel that I am the main victim here on the outside. I have to face the world each time I go out of the house, and that isn't easy. I think it is important for him to appreciate my visits, my time and my support, which I think he does now, because of the course, and I am very glad that we did the course together.'* A second Respondent commented: *'...you learn about what they (students) do when they are in prison, and you get an opportunity to get your views across about how it is for you on the outside. You also get to support them in what they are doing in prison. You have*

an opportunity to try to help them change their ways to stop offending.’ The third Respondent commented: *‘I think it gives the prisoner an understanding of how their actions impact upon members of their family. I think these young guys really need to develop a sense of empathy concerning the impact of their behaviour on others, and a course like this helps them to focus on this.’*

In terms of exploring **Respondents’ motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, one Respondent sought to gain a greater understanding of her relative and about how his behaviour had resulted in a prison sentence, which she had found very upsetting and hard to cope with initially. The second Respondent wanted to support her fiancé and spend time with him. She commented: *‘It also meant that we could act as a proper couple, and I liked that very much. It helped me to know what (student) was doing in Prison.’* The third Respondent saw his involvement as *‘keeping my link with my father tight.’* The fourth Respondent was concerned that his brother was spending a great deal of his time in his prison cell, and the student reportedly told his brother that if he would agree to participate in the course, that would enable him (student) to be out of his cell more often. This Respondent commented: *‘After getting involved, I realised that there was a lot more to this course than both of us at first thought. My main initial motive, however, was just to get (student) out of his cell.’*

In response to being asked whether they had **any anxieties about participating in FM, or were surprised by the content of the programme**, the two female Respondents expressed considerable anxiety about meeting people they did not know, and speaking about themselves in public. One of these Respondents was quite upset that her son was referred to as an ‘inmate’, commenting: *‘I did notice that they called our relatives inmates, and I thought, he’s my son, not an inmate’.* Both, however, eventually realised that the other supporters were in a similar situation to themselves and, as a consequence, they began to feel more comfortable and at ease in the surroundings. One of them summed up what they were both clearly feeling, as follows: *‘I was very uneasy as I was unsure what it was all about. I felt uncomfortable because you are with a lot of other people you don’t know, and you don’t want other people to know your private business. I’m pleased to say that it did get easier and easier as the time went on. I realised eventually that all the families were actually in the same situation and that made you feel a bit better. Because I began to feel more comfortable, I began to look forward to the next things happening on the course.’* In terms of being **surprised**, one of the female Respondents had valued the videos about the *Selfish Giant* and the visits video, and expressed her surprise in the following terms: *‘... the prisoners were recognising how difficult it is for relatives when someone goes to prison. I thought it was very good that they are being helped to realise this, as it doesn’t just affect them.’* The other female Respondent was surprised to see Prison Officers so actively involved in the programme. She commented: *‘I was surprised, because you hear all sorts of things about Prison Officers and what they do, but during this course I realised that they do different things, like this course, not just lock people up. For me, seeing the Prison Officers involved, it seemed more like the normal world. Obviously they can’t always be your friend, because they’ve got a complicated job to do, but it did make me realise that these Prison Officers are also humans. I especially noticed this when I saw (student) relaxed, calm and talking with the Prison Officers, and he said that some of them are OK people.’*

In terms of the two male Respondents, neither of them had any anxiety about becoming involved in the programme, although one said he did harbour a rather selfish anxiety in that he had to delay a business trip abroad to accommodate the timing of the course. One was surprised and pleased by the content of the programme, remarking: *'...it did make the prisoners look at themselves and the impact their behaviour had on others.'* The other did not register any surprise and commented: *'I felt very comfortable throughout, and they provided refreshments for us.'*

In relation to their **impressions of the sessions they attended**, their responses to the **Supporters Only** session were as follows: All the Respondents found this session very helpful, useful and informative, enabling them to be clear about how they could best support their relatives. As indicated earlier, the two female Respondents were initially rather anxious about this session but, once they relaxed and felt more comfortable, they also found it enjoyable. One male and one female Respondent expressed disappointment that they did not see their relatives in this session. The female commented: *'...it was a very long journey, as on that occasion I had to go on my own, and I was really disappointed that I did not get to see (student) on that day.'* The male Respondent remarked: *'I had to take time off work and I realised that I was going to have to delay a business trip abroad because of the timing of the course, so I did feel a bit resentful about that, plus there was no contact with our relative on that day. However, after meeting the guys (Prison Officers) in charge of the course, they made me realise that if the course had had such an impact on them, then maybe it might have an impact on (brother/student). Certainly it was clear that it had changed one of these POs from a 'screw' into a compassionate man, so I thought that it seemed a worthwhile course.'*

In terms of the **What Next** session, all four Respondents found this extremely useful and informative, with the agencies present providing relevant information regarding internal prison issues such as educational courses, other prison courses, and transfer procedures, and external issues such as drug and alcohol counselling and accommodation. One of the male Respondents, however, was annoyed and disappointed at the lack of Probation Service presence. He articulated his concern in the following manner: *'Whilst this is a very helpful session, what really annoyed me on the day was that there was no Probation presence, and bearing in mind that the people from the agencies in the hall are the very people that Probation puts people coming out of prison in touch with anyway, I thought that Probation should have been there. I do wonder whether the people that work in the system, like Prison Officers and Probation, don't always have faith in this course, so they don't support it, and I think it's like a snub. I actually think this course does what Probation should do, so maybe they're not happy about that, so don't seem to support it. I also think that because some Prison Officers and Probation Officers don't rate the course, those that do are given a bit of a hard time because of it – like, it's not something you do if you're a 'screw' or a Probation Officer.'* All Respondents appreciated the opportunity to spend a whole day with their relatives.

All Respondents experienced the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session as unproblematic, having no difficulty in sharing their perspectives with their relatives. Reportedly, some of the scoring differed between relatives and

students, but agreeably negotiated compromises were able to be reached following discussion, to achieve an agreed Family Action Plan. A slight area of confusion arose in this session for one of the female Respondents who had scored her (student) considerably higher than he had scored himself, because she based her scoring on her experience of his past behaviour. She reported that after discussion with the Family Support Worker available in this session, she had been advised to score (student) as she perceived his behaviour now, not in the past, so she said that she altered some of her scores accordingly. She nevertheless felt that her (student) was not being very honest about his scores, indicating: *'He thought that getting work was the most important thing, but I was thinking about the problems he had had in the past regarding his behaviour.'* One of the male Respondents felt that this activity was rather ironic, because, as he described it: *'...some of the guys (students) just miss the trick in identifying their problems. (Student) and I did have some similar scores and we agreed about his offending behaviour, but he completely missed the most important problem he has, which is in family relationships. He has 3 children with 3 different mothers and has hardly seen any of his children since he was imprisoned. Once I reminded him of this and we talked it through, he agreed that he does have a significant problem in terms of relationships. It seemed to take my perspective for him to see this.'* Conversely, one of the students gave himself a high score for being at risk of influence from associates if he returns to the area from whence he came into prison, which came as a surprise to his relative who had scored this issue as low, but who has subsequently decided to move house, recognising that this has been a contributory factor to the student's offending in the past.

Three of the four Respondents confirmed that they had received a copy of the Family Action Plan; the fourth could not remember.

In terms of the Respondents' perception of the **main benefits of involvement in FM for them**, whilst they all felt that they had enjoyed good quality relationships with their relatives prior to imprisonment, they remarked on observable improvements in their relatives' attitudes and behaviours which, in turn, had proved beneficial to the Respondents. For example, students had demonstrated a greater understanding and appreciation of how it is to experience imprisonment from the Respondent's perspective, and some students appeared less self-centred. Although all Respondents reported that the level of communication with their relatives had been good, there was evidence of improvement in that area also. One male Respondent (a son), articulated the benefits for himself as follows: *'The course actually helped me to understand what it is to be a family man, as well as being part of my father's family. I am a family man too, and I learned things on this course that have helped me in my role as a father and with my extended family. I can't stress how important it is to be a good family man. As I suggested earlier, it is very important that when a relative goes into prison that the family is there for them, but equally, that they are still there for their family, because if they get down and depressed, that has a knock-on effect throughout the family. I personally found the course very uplifting.'*

In terms of **support for the Respondents**, three of them had the benefit of close family and friends, and the remaining Respondent considered that it was his role to be supportive to his youngest brother (student), rather than seeking personal benefit from participation, and support for himself.

In response to questions related to **what aspect of the sessions Respondents thought had made the most impression on the students, and what had been pursued by the students following the programme**, all the Respondents felt that their relatives had learned much and had developed greater insight and self-confidence as a result of participating in *FM*. Degrees of surprise, pride and pleasure were expressed by the Respondents concerning some of the roles their relatives had played in the Presentation. One Respondent could not envisage her (student) participating in role play or performing in public, but she was clearly delighted when he did so. Another Respondent commented: *'I think (student) seemed quite happy with everything. He wanted to know a lot of things about handling things inside prison and outside, and he learned all of those things because of the course.'* Another Respondent remarked: *'...once (student) developed some insight into the real nature of his problems – for example, in terms of his external relationships with the mothers of his children, and his children – this did allow him to focus appropriately on aims and goals in those areas.'* The fourth Respondent reported that his relative had been a teacher for forty five years prior to imprisonment and that his imprisonment had been a great shock to his family. He commented: *'We are not used to this sort of situation as a family. It has made us realise that no matter what area of life you may come from, anyone can get caught up in a situation that may turn out badly. Because he was a teacher, (student) is used to taking part in group activities and participating in learning and teaching situations with others, so it was not a problem for him participating in the course with the other students and relatives. I think he enjoyed the role play in the students' sessions and he told me about the Selfish Giant and the Blinda film. He also sang in the Presentation. As I have said previously, we have always got on very well as father and son and I think we both learned from the experience of participating in this course.'*

As all of the students related to these Respondents have now been transferred from Belmarsh, the Respondents were not sure whether their relatives have been able to follow up on their Family Action Plans, although one student is said to be involved in full-time Education, and two others making approaches about educational courses in their new Prisons.

Respondents were asked **which part(s) of their involvement in the FM programme they found most useful, and which part(s), if any, they would improve**. They were also asked to rate the *FM* programme overall, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 was very poor, and 10 was excellent.

All of the Respondents found participation in all the sessions useful and supportive for their relatives as well as for themselves. They especially appreciated and enjoyed the day they were able to spend with their relatives. One Respondent reported: *'All of the course was really useful, as it helped me to get to know (student) better. Sometimes you can just see the surface of someone, but the course helped me to see deeper into (student). We exchanged the four letters and I attended all of the sessions and the presentation, and it was all very good. (Student) and I don't hide anything from each other, and we are good communicators, but you could tell from other prisoners and their families that it was really hard for some of them to communicate, which I found very strange, because in our family we all show our love for each other. But, after the second session when we spent the time with our relatives, you could see what a difference, what an improvement it made for some*

families where they had found it hard to communicate at first. If this course can break the silence between two people, then I think that is good – that is the way it should be between people.’ Another Respondent commented: *‘...all the sessions I attended with (student), including the Presentation, were all good.’* All Respondents had exchanged the four letters with their relatives. The remaining two Respondents, the two males, actually developed a friendship between themselves which is still current, and both referred to this during interview. One of them reported: *‘I have to say that I found it all really fantastic – every aspect of it. I also made a new friend as a result of it – we got on really well and we are still in contact with each other.’* The remaining Respondent commented: *‘...the whole process of setting targets and goals and moving towards them, and maintaining a focus on what has to be done’...* was good.

The four Respondents **rated the FM programme** overall with scores of **8, 9, and two 10s** (where 10=excellent), in the range of very good to excellent.

In terms of enquiring whether Respondents thought there was **anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners’ relatives and supporters**, the responses were as follows:

There was only one minor complaint from one Respondent, related to the provision of food by the Prison Service, and she commented: *‘I have only one small complaint, and that was the type of food that was provided, as I found that it was mainly ‘foreign’ food – prawn pastries and stuff, which I don’t eat – and I didn’t think it was particularly appropriate for children. However, the usual hut was open and available to us, so I used that instead. Apart from that small niggle, I thought everything was good.’* The other three Respondents were fulsome in their praise of the programme, and suggested that it be carried on and spread throughout the UK prisons so that more families can take advantage of it.

Finally, Respondents were asked if there was **anything else they would like to say about FM or Safe Ground** that had not been covered earlier in the interview.

Two of the Respondents suggested that more Prison Officers should be encouraged to play a part in the programme, particularly in view of the authority they wield, and thus, the potential for influencing prisoners in positive ways. It was also felt that if more Prison Officers could become involved, the course could be delivered in more prisons to more prisoners.

One other Respondent commented: *‘I thought that it was excellent that you actually went into the prison, met your loved one, and were able to spend a day with them. It helped me as an individual as well, because I learned a lot about being a father. The FM course is one of the best courses I have ever attended. It helped my Dad and I to stay very close and I think we both benefited from it.’*

3.3 HMP Birmingham - November 2008 Family Man Programme

Feedback was obtained from **three Respondents** – three mothers. Their relatives were imprisoned for offences of violence, burglary to fund a drug habit, and supplying drugs. One of the students was released in December 2008 and is still at liberty, and the other two students expect to be released during 2009. One of the students had no children, another had two children, a son aged 4 years and a daughter aged 2 years (with a girlfriend), and the remaining student had a 1 year old daughter (with a girlfriend). One of the Respondents described her ethnic origin as British Mixed Race and the remaining two, British White.

It was the first **experience of a prison-based programme** for all of these Respondents, and they all rated inclusion as extremely important. One mother articulated the importance of inclusion as follows: *‘... for the sake of your child, so that you can support him. It is good for them too. When you come out of prison it is like looking for a needle in a haystack when you are trying to get sorted out in the community. Being included in courses like this benefits both sides, prisoner and relative.’* Another mother remarked: *‘You see and hear lots of things that you would not have seen for yourself. I would not have thought of a course like this in prison, but I think it makes a difference to people’s lives. I have kept it in my mind since I did it.’*

In terms of exploring **Respondents’ motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, all three mothers wanted to support their sons (students) and one was concerned to demonstrate her love for her son by participating in the programme. One expressed her motivation in the following terms: *‘I hoped that because I was involved and supporting him, he would take heed of what the course provided and that he would follow through all the things he said he was going to do, and all the things he wrote on his piece of paper (Action Plan), for his own sake.’*

In terms of being **anxious or surprised** regarding their participation, one mother had no anxieties and although the other two felt rather nervous initially, once they had become acquainted with other relatives and supporters, found that experience supportive and helpful for themselves. All were complimentary about the processes involved in the programme and one mother expressed mild surprise about the programme content, in the following terms: *‘The video they showed was very good and I felt a bit emotional after watching that. I didn’t think they would go into so many things – they even tell you and your relative about contacting people who can help when your relatives gets out of prison.’*

In relation to their **impressions of the sessions they attended**, their recollections of the **Supporters Only** session were that this was a very helpful and informative session in which they were pleased to see their relatives’ work (portfolios). One mother found this to be a very emotional session, especially when she introduced herself, remarking: *‘It was very helpful, as it told us what was going on and I saw some of (student’s) work in his portfolio. I did become quite emotional in this session and when I started, some of the others started crying too, as they had the same feelings as me.’*

In terms of the **What Next** session, one mother was unable to attend this session, as her relative had to be produced at court on that day. Of the other two mothers, one felt that visiting the various agencies had proved helpful and would assist her son on

his release. The mother whose son was released in December 2008, articulated her response as follows: *'I think this was a very good session and a very good idea to do something like this before they come out of prison, because as I said before, it can be like looking for a needle in a haystack deciding what to do when you first get out. I know about this first hand, as I have been in prison too in the past. It is very important that you know where to go to get the help you need when you come out of prison. We asked about the Job Centre and signing on, the Probation Service about his Licence and the other sort of help they could give, and about housing. (Student) has been staying with me since he came out of prison last December, and he is signing on, sees his Probation Officer because of the Licence, and they are helping him to try and get a place of his own. He should have his own place now because he is 23 years old.'*

In terms of the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session, the mother who was unable to attend the **What Next** session because her son was at court, undertook this exercise on a different day from the others. All three mothers felt confident about being honest with their respective sons (students), and in their scoring. All reported that their scores were similar to their relatives' scores and they were able to reach agreement about the Family Action Plan. A particular concern for one mother was that her son (student) should not return to her home, because apparently he had been mixing with some dangerous people prior to imprisonment and she was worried that there may be repercussions for her son, and for herself, if he were to return to her home. She expressed her concern as follows: *'Some of these drugs people were not at all nice characters and I would be worried for (student's) safety if he came home to me and was in amongst them again. Even I am a bit worried for myself, and I still watch my back when I go out. So, it's best that he lives elsewhere and makes some new friends to go around with so that he will be able to start afresh. I think the Probation Service is arranging for him to go into a Hostel.'* Her son was reportedly in agreement with this course of action.

None of these Respondents could recollect receiving a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In response to the question regarding what the Respondents felt were the **main benefits of involvement in FM for them**, all the mothers reported improvement in communication (particularly letter-writing) and generally the quality of their relationship with their relative, which one of the mothers summed up as follows: *'Myself and (student) are much closer now. He is much more open when we talk, and when he writes letters. He doesn't bottle things up the way he used to and this is much better for him.'* One of the mothers was concerned when her son had been transferred to Birmingham and said of that: *'The only thing that was very hard for me was when they transferred him to Birmingham, which is a very long way for me to travel, but he's my son and I wanted to be there for him, so I did it (the programme).'*

In terms of **support for the Respondents**, all mothers reported that they had the benefit of family and, in one case, employer support.

In response to the questions related to **what aspect of the sessions Respondents thought had made the most impression on the students, and what had been**

pursued by the students following the programme, one mother felt that her son had benefited from the group work undertaken by the students in private, as he could speak about how he felt in that group, in confidence, without fear of repercussions, and that, in turn, she felt, had benefited the mother/son relationship. Another mother felt that that fact that she participated in the course with her son had been most helpful for him. The third mother reported that she had also noticed an improvement in her son's relationship with his girlfriend, and their daughter who, apparently, had just been returned to her mother (student's girlfriend) after a period in Care, and the mother attributed this improved relationship to the student's involvement in the programme.

In terms of **following up on Family Action Plans**, the student who was released in December 2008 is said to be co-operating fully with his Probation Officer who is assisting him to find his own accommodation. He is also searching for employment, and his mother indicated that she is encouraging him to go back to College. With regard to the two other students, one undertook another course following **FM**, but his mother could not recollect its title, although he received a Certificate for it. He is also engaging in education in the Prison. This mother attended a meeting in April with her son's Probation Officer where she learned that he is doing very well. This student is reportedly considering undertaking grief counselling, as he was very affected by the death of his father (some seven years ago), which occurred whilst he was in prison then, and now that he is in prison again, this has been preying on his mind a lot. His mother feels that this would be of benefit to her son. The third Respondent reported that her son was transferred to Liverpool prison following **FM**, where she believes he is now much more proactive about getting involved in activities, and he has told his mother and his Probation Officer that he would like to go to college to do music and media studies once he is released.

In response to the question about **which part(s) of their involvement in the FM programme Respondent's found most useful, and which part(s), if any, they would improve**, one mother found the talking and mixing with other relatives and supporters the most helpful. Another felt that all the sessions she attended were good, and her being involved in the programme allowed her to let her son (student) know that *'I am there for him.'* The third mother found the **What Next** session the best part, but indicated that all the sessions were good. None of these Respondents felt the need for any improvement.

All three Respondents **rated the FM programme** overall with scores of **10** (where 10= excellent), one remarking: *'If I could give it 20, I would.'*

In terms of whether the Respondents thought there was **anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters**, two suggested that Safe Ground should keep the programme the way it is, and keep doing it with as many people as possible. One remarked: *'I particularly think the day when you meet with the agencies is excellent, as it gives you something specific to aim for when you get out of prison. As I said before, I've been in prison myself and I know how hard it can be to get settled back in the community.'* The third Respondent found the question rather difficult to answer, commenting: *'This is the only course I have been involved in, so I'm not able to*

compare it with anything else that Safe Ground does, but I think the FM course is excellent and I don't think there could be any improvement in it at present.'

Finally, in response to being asked if there was **anything else they would like to say about FM or Safe Ground**, the three Respondents replied as follows:

'I just think involving relatives and having other agencies there is a good idea for the sake of all the prisoners.'

'I think people should think about doing courses like this, as it is very helpful for everyone, and gives them something useful to occupy themselves with in prison. I would have quite liked to do a course like that myself earlier on, as I found it very helpful indeed.'

'I do feel so sorry for those in prison who don't have any family or anyone to support them, and I hope that the FM course continues, and such courses for people in prison get better and better. Also, I hope that more people can benefit from this type of course.'

3.4 HMP Bristol - September 2008 Family Man Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **three Respondents** who participated – a wife, a girlfriend and a fiancée, although in the case of the fiancée, she advised that she and her former fiancé barely commenced the course before their relationship broke down and, therefore, she felt unable to participate in an interview. She did make it clear that the course in no way influenced the breakdown. Thus, the majority of the feedback is taken from the two Respondents who completed the programme. The students involved were imprisoned for burglary offences and driving offences. The anticipated release dates of the students are during 2009. Two of the students had children – one had a son aged 10 years (the product of a former relationship), and the other a step-daughter aged 15 years, a step-son aged 11 years, a son aged 3 years, a son aged 16 months (all connected with his wife) and a son with a former partner, aged 13 years. Two Respondents described their ethnic origin as British White, the third, as English White.

It was the Respondents' first **experience of a prison-based programme**, although one Respondent and her husband (student) have since undertaken a two-day couple relationship course, also in Bristol Prison, which both reportedly found useful, but **FM** was described as broader-based and had greater benefits for the family as a whole.

Relatives and supporters' inclusion in prison-based programmes were rated by the wife and girlfriend Respondents as extremely important. One Respondent commented: *'...by knowing what my husband was doing, it was easier for me to encourage, praise and support him. Because of my involvement, I also understood fully what he was talking about when he was telling me what he was doing.'*

Another said: *'I knew that they did courses and things in prison, but this was the first time I have ever been involved. I particularly noticed that this course motivated (student). I was motivated to participate, and that motivated (student), and vice versa, - it was like a Catch 22 situation – very positive for both of us. (Student) has done courses in the past, but he really switched himself on for this one.'*

In terms of exploring **Respondents' motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, they wanted to be supportive, and one particularly enjoyed seeing her (student) doing something constructive. She also felt that it was good to be allowed into the prison, to mix with other relatives and supporters and to see (student's) work, so that she knew what he was talking about. She also commented: *'I thought it would help me to decide whether it would be worth my while to give (student) another chance.'*

Neither of the Respondents had any **anxiety** about being involved in the programme, but both expressed **surprise** at the 'academic' level of the programme. One was particularly pleased that the student earned a nationally recognised Certificate. The other remarked: *'I have recently been doing a Degree course, and I found it helpful to see all the different types of people (students and their supporters) in the jail and to hear about their backgrounds. They (students) really switched themselves on and got involved in this course. I was also surprised at the level of academic work in the workbook, and parts of the course also worked my head.'*

In relation to the Respondents' **impressions of the sessions they attended**, their responses to the **Supporters Only** session was summed up by one of them as follows: *'I was quite impressed, because they gave us all the information they possibly could. They made us feel very comfortable in each other's presence. There was no pressure, which I found comforting, because I did not have to 'measure up' to any standard. I thoroughly enjoyed it. The main thing was that I learned about the course and what (student) was doing. We got to look at the Portfolio work, and I found that helpful, knowing what work they (students) had to carry out, and what (student) had done so far. It provided us with better insight into the course and the student's side of it too.'*

In terms of the **What Next** session, both Respondents felt this was an extremely useful session. They both visited all of the available agencies on the day, with their respective students. One Respondent remarked upon the importance of (student) catching up with his registration as a welder and fabricator so that he could recommence work in his trade when released.

Both Respondents experienced a difference in perspective from their (students) during the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session, illustrated by the commentary below. In the case of one of the Respondents, in relation to the topic of employment, she took an employer's perspective, rather than her own personal view, in relation to considering whether to employ her relative, which her relative questioned. He is the former welder, and suffers from epilepsy (although is not light-sensitive), and the Respondent felt he would be considered as a high risk to employ. In discussion, however, whilst understanding the perspective his relative had taken, he suggested that the condition had never prevented him from working as a welder in the past, thus, he did not consider this to be a high risk area for him on

release. In resolving this difference, his relative reported: *‘Once we’d talked over where we had different scores, we agreed to adjust things accordingly. This helped us to talk properly as a couple. In the past (student) had to have things his way, and did not necessarily listen to, or take on board, other people’s opinions. But, he seems to have learned that he cannot have it all his own way. By the time we got to this action planning session, we were able to work together on things – we discussed each other’s views and he actually listened. He now does actually listen, and the FM course has done that!’* The other Respondent found the session where she had to prepare her score sheet, before sharing this with the student, rather difficult, for the following reasons: *‘I can only really gauge what’s going on in (student’s) head when I can talk to him about things and try to influence him about things. So, without talking with him to start with, it was difficult to do this exercise. For example, he’ll say things like I won’t take drugs when I get out, yet I know that he will be excitable and ‘flying’ the day he gets out, so could well go straight back on the drugs. I found it hard to put my expectations down. He knows what his problems are. When we did discuss our separate perspectives, I was more harsh with him about his potential for relapse, than he was, because I’ve seen him when he gets out of jail and his head can be in the clouds.’*

Both Respondents recalled receiving a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In terms of what the Respondents felt were the **main benefits of involvement in FM for them**, both reported improvements in communication with the students. One illustrated an important benefit for her in the following terms: *‘...now having somebody who will listen to my point of view, being able to talk it over as a couple and come to an agreement on what action to take.’* The other Respondent commented: *‘(Student) now talks a lot more sense, not just silly stuff like I love you and want to marry you. His level and content of conversation has certainly gone up a gear. I think he has more understanding about the consequences of his behaviour and he certainly writes much better letters. When he telephones, he is also talking a lot more sense.’*

Both Respondents **felt supported** themselves by other relatives and friends.

In response to questions related to **what aspect of the sessions Respondents thought had made the most impression on the students, and what had been pursued by the students following the programme**, both Respondents felt that from the evidence they had observed regarding improvements in the students’ ability to communicate, it was this aspect of the programme that had probably made the most impression on the students. They also felt there was evidence of improved communication between the students and their respective children. The girlfriend articulated her perspective as follows: *‘(Student) is a very proud man and I know that in the past he has felt as if he is not good enough – because he cannot buy his son things. Now, he has realised other things in relation to his son. Since doing this course, he has maintained a stronger link with his little lad. He talks about him more. He has also realised how much he has hurt his mother in the past, by his behaviour. In the past it has been rather like pulling teeth, trying to get (student) to talk about important things like family and relationship issues, but that has improved very much since doing this course. The video about the father in prison, with the son, made a big impact on (student). I have given (student) s—t in the past because of*

him leaving me out here – he would come out of jail, didn't give a ---- about me or anything else, would take drugs and go back to jail where he'd continue taking drugs – and leaving me out here again. I think that he has certainly learned a lot from this course, and he knows that if he messes up again after this sentence, we are over. It certainly made him think about and understand the consequences of his behaviour more than he has done in the past.'

In terms of the **students following up on their Family Action Plans**, both have been moved to other prisons. One student has undertaken two further courses since *FM*. One was *Storybook Dads*, and the other, with his wife, for couples, about partnership. His wife remarked that in her view both of these additional courses offered other ways to communicate, and they both reinforced what husband and wife learned from the *FM* programme. This Respondent was particularly proud of her husband for achieving NVQ qualifications, as she said that he was severely dyslexic as a child, and reading and writing have always been difficult for him. The other Respondent advised that as a result of her sending the student a College Prospectus, he has secured a place on a hair-dressing course for when he is released. As well as the student having learned much from the *FM* programme, the Respondent considered that the student also felt much more positive about himself.

Respondents were asked **which part(s) of their involvement in the FM programme they found most useful, and which part(s), if any, they would improve.**

The two Respondents reported as follows:

'The supporters only day was very good because we knew exactly what to expect, but I think the What Next day was best, because as a result of that, I know what to encourage (student) with. The action planning gave us something to work on together, but the 'finding out' (What Next) session was so very useful because knowing the information, I can now encourage him to follow through on it. I knew what he was progressing during the course, and because I knew what he was talking about, he did not have to keep explaining things to me, so that meant I had more time to praise him and encourage him to keep going. People need praise whenever they are trying to better themselves – we all do. We both have a copy of the Action Plan. It is very important for both husband and wife to have a copy of it, as it is a reminder of what you have done and what is left to do.'

'I enjoyed reading (student's) portfolio. It was nice to see how the course was structured from the lads' point of view – it seemed to allow them to work on all different levels. I liked the Presentation, which brought them all together – I think that helped them to get on with each other. If (student) doesn't like someone, he can be really stubborn, so it was good for him to do the course with the other lads. The day we visited the organisations was a good session.'

Neither Respondent could suggest any improvements.

The Respondents **rated FM** overall as excellent, quoting scores of **9 and 10** (where 10=excellent).

In terms of whether Respondents thought there was **anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters**, the Respondents offered one comment and one suggestion, as follows:

'As I'm not sure how Safe Ground puts together the course, it's difficult for me to suggest how they could improve the actual content, but I do think this course overall is excellent. I do think it should be more widespread, across all types of prisoner and all categories of prison, nationwide.'

'Whilst it is nice that the men on the course get Certificates, it would be nice if the relatives and supporters who participated in the course were given something in recognition of the part we played also. I think we played a very important role in the course and it would have been nice to have had that recognised.'

In terms of additional comments regarding **FM or Safe Ground**, one Respondent urged Safe Ground to **'just keep doing this course'**, and the other remarked: **'Nothing to add, other than the fact that I thoroughly enjoyed the course – we both did.'**

3.5 HMP Bristol - February 2009 Family Man Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **four Respondents** who participated – a mother, two female partners and a fiancée. The students involved were imprisoned for offences of attempted arson, robbery and burglary. One student was released in April 2009, one is scheduled for released in August 2009 and the remaining two students will be released in May 2010. Two of the students had children, one had a 22 month old daughter, and the other a step-daughter aged 6 years and a daughter aged 3 years with the Respondent partner. Three Respondents described their ethnic origin as British White, the third as White English and she described her partner (student) as White Irish.

For three of the Respondents it was their first **experience of a prison-based programme**. The fourth Respondent had participated in a couple-relationship course with her partner in Bristol, prior to **FM**, and she felt that **FM** was the better one of the two.

In the cases of the mother and the two partner Respondents, they all felt that it was extremely important to be included in prison-based programmes; the girlfriend Respondent felt less so. The latter responded thus because she considered that the course was more for her boyfriend than herself, although she said that she thought that he had appreciated her involvement. The mother felt it important for the following reasons: **'If I wasn't invited to be included, I would be speculating about what was happening, and being involved keeps things in perspective. I think it is very important to be included. It made me feel like I was not on my own, with a son in prison.'** A partner Respondent felt it was important, commenting: **'... because a prison sentence affects both partners and children, and being included helps to maintain contact, and communication, and it also helps with the children.'** The

other partner Respondent remarked: *'I had never heard of anything like this course. It helped me personally, because I do not believe a lot of the things that (student) tells me, and going in and doing the course with him and seeing his attitude did reinforce my belief in him. I think this course is very important because it is called Family Man, so it is family oriented.'*

In terms of exploring **Respondents' motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, the girlfriend Respondent felt that it had been helpful to know what (student) had been doing on the course, and she had enjoyed her involvement. The mother Respondent had been severely emotionally upset by her son's imprisonment and she hoped to gain knowledge – she said *'because knowledge is power'* – and she found the course a helpful outlet for her feelings in this respect and an opportunity to share her feelings with her son. This Respondent also said that she had benefited greatly from support from AB, the Family Support Worker on this course. One of the partner Respondents felt that everyone in the family could benefit from the programme and she remarked: *'Both of you have to take responsibility and recognise your faults and try and improve things between you, and for the sake of the children.'* The remaining partner Respondent confessed that she had been sceptical when her partner asked her to become involved. This sentence was not the first her partner had served, although the first since their daughter had been born. She had asked him to leave their home just prior to his arrest and she commented: *'I was ready to throw in the towel last August, so I thought maybe I had nothing to lose by being involved, and I possibly might gain by doing it.'*

Neither the mother nor the girlfriend had any **anxiety** about being involved in the programme. The mother remarked: *'I was looking forward to spending quality time with (student) – much better than on an ordinary visit, which is not relaxed.'* The girlfriend explained that the student's (her boyfriend's) mother accompanied her to two of the sessions (Supporters Only and the Presentation), and as she said she did not share a particularly good relationship with the student's mother, she felt much better when his mother was not there.

The two partner Respondents did feel anxious. One felt anxious about talking in a group and with her partner about how she felt, and the other, although she went with a friend (whose partner was also on the course), felt very anxious, and angry with her partner for being in prison and placing her in a difficult situation, and she said that she became tearful in the Supporters Only session as a result.

In terms of being **surprised** about the programme, all of the Respondents expressed being surprised for a variety of reasons. The mother Respondent was surprised to see so many other relatives and supporters and was pleased to see that her son (student) was friendly with another supporter's relative on the programme. One of the partner Respondents was surprised by all of the programme, as she had not known what to expect. She was especially surprised at having other agencies available in the What Next session, and by the Presentation. The other partner Respondent was surprised by the intensity of the course. She commented: *'(Student) has done courses in the past, such as health & safety, and electrical, but this course was full-on intense. Sometimes (student) would phone me up during the course, and be upset, and I thought that although it was not good that he was upset, at least the course was generating emotions in him because he was thinking about things as a result of the'*

course, and he was talking about it.' The girlfriend Respondent expressed surprise that her boyfriend (student) owned up and took responsibility for committing the offence. She remarked: *'...although we've talked about this before, I've never heard him accept responsibility – he tended to blame other people. Perhaps doing the course made that difference.'*

In relation to the Respondents' **impressions of the sessions they attended**, according to their responses to the **Supporters Only** session, the two partner Respondents and the mother Respondent all found this session helpful and informative about the programme. They appreciated seeing their relatives' portfolio work and were all impressed by what they saw. Praise was also forthcoming from them regarding the Prison Officer, the Teacher and the Family Support Worker who led the programme, all of whom they found *'brilliant and very friendly'* and for whom *'nothing was too much trouble'*. The mother Respondent explained that she became very emotionally upset when she was invited to speak about herself, and that some of the other relatives and supporters also began to cry as a result. Following this, she felt comforted and supported by the staff and other supporters on that occasion. The girlfriend Respondent explained that this was one of the occasions when she was accompanied by her boyfriend's (student) mother, and although she absorbed the information given about the programme, she found the session as a whole *'quite boring'*. She hastened to add, however, that she knew that other people had not found it boring and suggested: *'I think it was something to do with me though, not the people doing the session.'*

In terms of the **What Next** session, without exception, all Respondents found this a very helpful session. The two partner Respondents benefited from practical advice themselves. One had been left with considerable debts when her partner went to prison and in this session they visited the Bristol Debt Advisory Centre agency desk, who were extremely helpful, and within a few days following the session, the Respondent was offered an appointment with this agency in the community and reported: *'So far, they have been fantastic in helping me.'* The other partner Respondent received advice about an outstanding water bill which she was able to act on. The girlfriend Respondent felt better about this session, as this was the day she and her boyfriend (student) were able to be together without his mother's presence. She thought that it was a very helpful and informative session remarking: *'I think it was good because I don't think (student) would try and find out about, and go to such agencies, normally, but now he knows more about them, he probably will.'*

In participating in the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session, only the mother Respondent experienced some anxiety about what her son might think of her scoring compared with his own. She reported that their scores were actually quite similar, but that he had been rather taken aback at her suggestion that he had a problem with confidence. She felt they were able to reach an understanding about that, and were able to agree an Action Plan. One of the partner Respondent's was quite surprised that hers and her partner's scores were quite different. She felt that he seriously under-estimated the problem he has had in the past with drugs, but they were able to discuss this and reach an agreed Family Action Plan. The other partner Respondent found compiling an Action Plan quite difficult, as she remarked: *'I want to believe (student) and for him to be OK when he comes out of prison, but on past experience, this may not be the case. So, I wanted him to focus on our*

daughter, as I thought that it would be harder for him to think he had let her down, than me. We then agreed that he would do Storybook Dads.' The girlfriend recollected this session as a good one and that her scores and her boyfriend's were similar.

The mother Respondent could not recollect whether she was given a copy of the Family Action Plan. One partner Respondent said that she did have a copy of the Family Action Plan on the day, but after the final version was handed in, she did not receive a copy. The other partner Respondent was certain that she did not receive a copy of the Family Action Plan, and the girlfriend Respondent could not recollect having been given a copy.

In terms of what the Respondents felt were the **main benefits of involvement in FM for them**, all reported an improvement in the quality of communication between themselves and the students, in terms of written communication, telephone conversations, and general discussion. The mother Respondent very much appreciated being able to spend time with her son in an atmosphere that allowed them to relax and laugh together when he was in prison (he was released in April 2009). Participating in the programme helped her to visualise what it was like for her son in prison, which then enabled her to feel closer to him, and gave her greater insight regarding people's behaviour. She summed up her experience thus: *'It made it very comfortable and we knew the reality of where they were, so that we could go home and think that it was not so bad. This course certainly taught me something as a mother and as an adult, about people who commit crime. It taught me not to rush to judgement about people who commit crime and are sent to prison, but you really have to experience it for yourself before you fully understand that it's important not to make judgements about the difficulties people can get themselves into, which sometimes lead to imprisonment.'* In terms of a change in behaviour, one of the partner Respondents was rather surprised and a little bemused when her partner (student) started telephoning her early in the mornings, which she explained as follows: *'He'd be very bright and say 'Hello, good morning, and how are you?', and during the course I saw that planning phone calls and other means of communication was something they did, so I thought that is what he must be doing. It certainly made a big, positive impact on me.'* The girlfriend Respondent felt more appreciated by her boyfriend (student) as a result of her participation in the programme, and reported that he talks more with her about his feelings now.

In terms of **support for the Respondents**, the mother Respondent received support from her partner, a friend at her workplace, and from the Family Support Worker (AB), who offered her some private counselling time outside of the programme, from which she felt she derived considerable benefit. She also referred to a supporter group run by AB, which she attended following the programme. She explained that this group enables supporters to reflect on their experience as relatives of offenders, and she thought this group was run by Safe Ground as part of the programme. (This is a group set up on the initiative of Alan Bradley, FSW and P.A.C.T. Visitor Centre Manager at Bristol prison). Another of the partner Respondents receives help and support from a Barnardo's volunteer – organised by her Health Visitor.

In response to questions related to **what aspect of the sessions Respondents thought had made the most impression on the students, and what had been pursued by**

the students following the programme, without exception, the Respondents felt that the students had benefited from the private group work they had undertaken and the role play aspect of it, as well as having their relatives participate in the programme with them. All seemed to thoroughly enjoy participating in the Presentation. All Respondents also commented that the students had all experienced difficulty in expressing themselves in the past, and they had all noticed a significant improvement in that area of their relationship with their 'student'. The mother Respondent reported that she did feel that her son *'went into his shell'* following the programme, and requested that no-one visit him or communicate with him, as he found such contact too unsettling and upsetting, so the next time she saw her son, following *FM*, was when he was released from prison and returned to her home. She reported that he is still in the process of adjusting from prison life and that things are a little strained in the household, but they are able to communicate, and she thinks he is sharing himself rather more with his sister who lives nearby, whom he visits and with whom he shares a good relationship. His sister recently gave birth to a baby girl and she thinks that (student) is very pleased about this and proud to be an Uncle. This mother is concerned not to 'smother' her son now that he is back at home. The student undertook *Storybook Dads* whilst in Prison and his mother thinks he has been following up his interests in history and science subjects since release. She is aware that he is in regular contact with his Probation Officer and that that Officer has arranged for him to attend some activities. Although he is currently unemployed, he is interested in pursuing work in the world of sport and attends the gym regularly.

Of the other students, two remain in Bristol and one has been transferred to Erlestoke. One of the partner Respondents was unaware of whether the student has been able to follow up any aspects of the Family Action Plan since undertaking *FM*. The other partner Respondent advised that the student applied to do *Storybook Dads* following *FM*, whilst still in Bristol, but now that he has been transferred, she is uncertain as to whether that is available in Erlestoke. The girlfriend Respondent advised that the student has applied to do ETS (Enhanced Thinking Skills), which she hopes he will find equally as helpful as *FM*.

Respondents were asked **which part(s) of their involvement in the FM programme they found most useful, and which part(s), if any, they would improve.**

Two of the Respondents found that meeting with other relatives and supporters and being able to share their feelings and experiences with others in a similar situation was very helpful and supportive, and three of the Respondents felt that the **What Next** session with the agencies was most useful. As the girlfriend Respondent suggested: *'I now also know what these agencies can offer, and can encourage (student) to follow them up when he gets out.'* They all enjoyed the Presentation.

In terms of a request, one of the Respondents said that she would have liked a copy of the Giant book (*The Selfish Giant*), to be able to use with her children, and she would also have liked to see all of the video (*Blinda*) about the visit, commenting: *'We only saw a clip with Frank and his mother, and I would have liked to see the whole video.'*

The Respondents **rated FM** overall as very good, to excellent, quoting **scores of 8, 9 and two 10s** (where 10=excellent).

In terms of enquiring whether Respondents thought there was **anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters**, only one Respondent offered commentary, as follows:

'I went into this course with a lot of doubts but came out feeling that it had been very beneficial for (student) and me. I think it would be good if somehow children could be included in a relevant way.'

In relation to additional comments regarding **FM or Safe Ground**, three of the Respondents offered the following:

'Just that it was good to be able to support (boyfriend/student) to do this course.'

'I enjoyed the course and I thought it was very good that relatives were invited to take part, as I think they should be.'

'I would just like to say 'thank you' for the course, and for the opportunity to do it. It is a very good idea.'

3.6 HMP Highpoint - November 2008 Family Man Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **two Respondents**, a mother and a female partner. However, although the partner had participated in the course, when her partner was released in January 2009, on the day of his release he got drunk and then smashed up the house when he arrived home, so the couple separated and are still apart. Although this Respondent spoke highly of the programme and felt that it was a very good idea to involve relatives, she preferred not to engage in a full interview. The mother, however, agreed to participate in a full interview. The student involved was serving a sentence for false imprisonment and is scheduled for release in August 2009. He has one 5 year old daughter with a girlfriend, with whom he has regular contact. The mother Respondent described her ethnic origin as British White.

FM was the Respondent's first **experience of a prison-based programme**, and she rated inclusion as extremely important, commenting: *'It helps you to understand imprisonment, as I knew nothing about it myself. This is the first time that the family has experienced imprisonment and we were very naïve about it.'*

This mother's **motivation for agreeing to participate in FM** was to support her son, but she remarked that she also learned things herself from the programme.

The Respondent was **anxious** about becoming involved, on the following basis: *'I've never done anything like this before, and I was very nervous. But, you eventually realise that you are not the only one in the situation'* (of having a relative in prison). She was not **surprised** by anything but remarked that she thought it was very well run and that the teachers were very nice, and helpful.

In relation to the Respondent's **impression of the sessions attended**, this mother described her impression of the **Supporters Only** session in the following terms: *'It*

was scary at first because I have never been involved in anything like that before, and I can't spell, but the teachers helped me. This course was as good for me as it was for (student son). At the end of this session I knew partly what was going to happen. I did see some of (student's) work on this day, and it was good.'

In terms of the **What Next** session, the Respondent visited various agencies with her son (student), and she recalled: *'...we visited the housing desk and the children's visits desk, but I cannot remember which others now. I listened to what (student) was being told, but he chose the agencies to visit.'*

This Respondent mother reported that she had no problem in engaging with her son (student) in the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session, indicating that she had no difficulty in saying what she thought to members of her family (including her son). She remarked that her scores and her son's were virtually the same, there being no disagreement between them about the scores.

This Respondent confirmed that she received a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In terms of what the Respondent felt were the **main benefits of involvement in FM** for her, she described these as follows: *'(Student) has always had difficulty expressing himself and I think this course helped him to open up more, because he talked more and sent more letters – in fact, we both did.'*

In terms of **support available for the Respondent**, she reported that she had family support, and she felt that participating in the programme brought the whole family closer together.

In relation to the question about **what aspect of the sessions** the Respondent thought had **made the most impression on the student**, and **what had been pursued by the student following the programme**, this mother indicated that her son (student) did not find it easy to mix with other people or write letters before he was involved in this programme, so thought these were benefits for him. She also felt that he played a good part in the Presentation, which activity she thought was *'brilliant'*.

In terms of the student following up his learning from the programme the Respondent reported: *'I know that (student) has been doing education and I think cooking, and he now has several Certificates. He was working as a council caretaker before this offence and they have not been able to keep his job open for him because of the length of his sentence. He really loved his job and I hope that he will be able to get another like it when he comes out.'* The student is still in Highpoint.

In response to the question about **which part(s) of her involvement in the FM programme she found most useful**, and **which part(s), if any, she would improve**, this mother replied: *'I don't think I would improve anything. The teachers ran it very well. It taught me to mix in with people and to talk with them. I found it all very interesting. I enjoyed the Presentation the most.'*

This Respondent mother **rated FM** overall as excellent, scoring it at **10** (where 10=excellent). She could not think of anything to suggest as to how things could be

improved, but expressed the hope that *FM* keeps going, for the following reason: *'...as it has been very useful to (student) and to me.'*

3.7 HMP Highpoint - February 2009 Family Man Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **one female Respondent**, who described herself as a friend of the student. She was rather uncertain of the details of the offence the student had committed, and indicated that she preferred not to comment upon it. The student is scheduled for release in January 2010. The student has no children. The Respondent described her ethnic origin as Black British and indicated that the student was African-Caribbean.

FM was the Respondent's first **experience of a prison-based programme**, and she rated inclusion as extremely important, commenting: *'...so that you can be in a good position to help the person (student) both when they are in prison and when they come out.'*

The Respondent's **motivation for agreeing to participate in *FM*** was because she considered the student to be very bright, and she wanted to help him *'take a step in the right direction for the rest of his life.'*

The Respondent had no **anxiety** about becoming involved in the programme, remarking: *'I just wanted to help him.'*

In terms of being **surprised** about the programme, she commented as follows: *'As prisons can be rather intimidating places, with 'screws' locking people up, I was quite surprised how relaxing it was. I felt comfortable even although I was in amongst other prisoners and other people.'*

In terms of her **impressions of the sessions she attended**, she advised that she had been unable to attend the **Supporters Only** session. In relation to the **What Next** session, she thought that this session was very good, and helpful. She remarked about it as follows: *'As I said before, (student) is a bright boy, and so far has wasted himself. We visited about four groups. He doesn't have any accommodation problems; his main concern is about getting a job. He is interested in education and mechanics. He found the groups very helpful and he was asking a lot of questions and obtaining some important information to help him for when he is released.'*

The Respondent had no qualms about the **Family Action Plan** activity, remarking: *'I was pointing out things to him that I thought were relevant to his problems, and he said, 'you're right about that, I know I've got these problems', so we agreed the Action Plan quite easily really.'*

The Respondent reported that she was not given a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In terms of what she felt were the **main benefits of involvement in *FM* for her**, she indicated that she and (student) do communicate a lot normally, but she was pleased to be able to be there for him in connection with the programme, and she thought that the student was confident in the knowledge that she was there to help him.

In terms of **what aspect of the sessions** she thought had **made the most impression on the student, and what had been pursued by him following the programme**, the Respondent replied as follows: *'I think that it helped him to realise that you can sort your life out and stay out of trouble if you put your mind to it. He understands that he cannot go straight out and everything will be OK straight away, he has to make an effort on his own behalf. He also knows that I will be there to help him do that.'* The student is still in Highpoint but the Respondent was unsure as to whether he had been able to follow up any of the educational things he was looking at, because they involved mechanics and business studies.

In relation to the question concerning **which part(s) of the programme she found most useful**, the Respondent replied: *'I think it was knowing how I could help him.'* In addition, she found the What Next and Family Action Plan sessions, and the Presentation, all helpful and interesting. She had no suggestions for improvement.

The Respondent **rated the FM programme** overall as excellent, scoring it at **10** (where 10=excellent). She felt that it would be really good if Safe Ground communicated with relatives and supporters even more, commenting: *'...so that they can be more involved and can help their relatives and friends better.'* Her closing remarks were: *'I think this course is really good and I think they should definitely carry on providing this course. I think it would be very good for people who go into prison for the first time too, as it might help them to keep out of further trouble and avoid more prison sentences.'*

3.8 HMP Wandsworth - November 2008 Programme

Feedback from this programme was obtained from **two Respondents**, a girlfriend and a wife. However, the wife advised me that although she and her husband had planned to do the course, they separated prior to the programme commencing. Feedback from this programme, therefore, is from the girlfriend only. The student involved is serving a sentence for burglary offences and his release date was not known by the Respondent, as she advised that it was dependent upon his being granted Parole. The student has two sons aged 5 years and 3 years, from a former relationship. The girlfriend Respondent described her ethnic origin as Mixed Race – British White/African Caribbean, and the student likewise.

FM was the Respondent's first **experience of a prison-based programme**, and she rated inclusion as extremely important, on the basis that: *'I think involving people they know from the outside gives prisoners an incentive to do things whilst they are in prison. It gave (student) an opportunity to prove to me that he could achieve things and improve himself.'*

The Respondent's **motivation for agreeing to participate in FM**, was expressed in the following terms: *'I hoped to find out how (student) was spending his time in prison. He was very selfish when he was out and I hoped that his being involved in this course would make a difference to him and to our relationship – that he would be less selfish.'*

This Respondent had no **anxiety** about participating in the programme but was **surprised** because there were things included in the programme that she did not think were offered to people in prison, and their relatives and friends. Indeed, she was surprised that the course was intended to help the prisoners, commenting: *'Before being involved I didn't think that anything was done to help people when they went to prison.'*

In relation to the Respondent's **impression of the sessions attended**, this girlfriend appreciated the **Supporters Only** session, as it provided her with the opportunity to meet and mix with the other supporters. She remarked: *'.. you got to know and talk with other people in the same situation as yourself'*.

In terms of the **What Next** session, she thought that this was a very helpful session for the student. She recalled that they visited all of the agencies available and remembered, in particular, the drugs agency, the accommodation agency (which she thought was very good indeed), and one connected with a relationship course, but could not recall which others they visited.

The Respondent reported that she did not find it difficult to be truthful with the student in the **Assessing Areas for Change & Family Action Plan** session, although from her perspective, she scored his 'problems' much higher than did he. She concluded from this session: *'I think it really made (student) realise how people can feel and see things differently about each other, and I think he realised afterwards why I scored him the way I did. He eventually agreed with what I said.'* The Respondent also appreciated seeing the student's portfolio work during this session.

This Respondent reported that she did not receive a copy of the Family Action Plan.

In terms of what the Respondent felt were the **main benefits of involvement in FM** for her, she described these as follows: *'I have found that (student) communicates much better since doing the course, and writes more and better letters now.'*

The Respondent reported that **she benefited from support** from friends and family in the community.

In relation to the question about **what aspect of the sessions** the Respondent thought had **made the most impression on the student, and what had been pursued by the student following the programme**, she felt that as result of undertaking this programme, with his girlfriend participating in it also, the student now had a greater realisation of where he had been going wrong in the past. She said that he seems eager to prove to her when he is released from prison, that he is a different person and has changed for the better. She reported that the student is still in Wandsworth and has applied for other courses. She is aware that he has undertaken an IT course, but did not know the details of any others.

In response to the question about **which part(s) of her involvement in the FM programme she found most useful, and which part(s), if any, she would improve**, the Respondent commented as follows: *'I feel that (student) has now accepted more responsibility for his past behaviour and we have been able to talk about that, and I*

hope that makes a difference once he comes out. He says he wants to prove to me that he is different now.'

This Respondent girlfriend **rated FM overall** as very good, scoring it at **8** (where 10 = excellent). She could not think of any suggested improvements that Safe Ground could make, but did think that there should be more such courses that involve relatives and friends. She had nothing more to add to her earlier comments.

4. Summary of Findings

As can be seen from the Respondents' comments, the majority were extremely satisfied with the *Family Man* programmes delivered in the five prisons. Although the sample was of modest size – one third of those who had participated in the five programmes - it nevertheless reflected a wide range of Respondents, of different ability, age groups, and from different ethnic backgrounds. These characteristics were reflected in the student group, who were serving a range of short and long term sentences for a variety of offences and is a reminder to the programme that it should always be sensitive to the needs of those from diverse cultures and also to those of a group of men whose offence seriousness, risk levels, and sentence lengths differ considerably.

In relation to responses to the **Supporters Only** session, without exception this was deemed extremely helpful and informative. For some Respondents, it was their first experience of having a relative or friend in prison, which had made a deep emotional impact upon them, as well as causing curiosity, speculation and concern about what goes on behind prison doors. For others, although they had experienced visiting prisons in the past, their perceptions of what did or did not occur therein, or what was on offer for prisoners, were altered in positive ways as a result of the programme. For the majority of Respondents, as a result of attending the Supporters Only session, it was the first time that they felt reliably informed about what the prisoner/student was doing, and thus, able to offer encouragement and support, and gauge their own contribution, from an informed perspective. From her remark that *'knowledge is power'*, one Respondent clearly felt 'empowered' by her experience of the Supporters Only session, and this was echoed by other Respondents.

A proportion of Respondents reported an initial nervousness and some emotional upset when attending the Supporters Only session but, due to the helpfulness and support of programme staff and (once acquainted with them) other supporters, they felt more confident and looked forward to what was to come. Some Respondents had travelled a considerable distance to attend the programmes and some disappointment was expressed that students were not included in the first (Supporters Only) session. From a comment made by a mature mother Respondent under the question *Is there anything that Safe Ground could do to improve the way it involves and works with prisoners' relatives and supporters?*, the researcher gained the impression from her that she observed younger women with children having *'more dealings with the group than I did – probably because they needed it'*, and as a result she was perhaps trying to suggest that mature mothers are equally in need of having their particular circumstances recognised within the programme, and that this may not be so apparent from appearances.

A high proportion of Respondents spoke in extremely complimentary terms of the helpfulness, kindness, patience and supportiveness of the staff who delivered the programmes. Notably, stereotypical images of Prison Officers were challenged and positively re-constructed as a result of the programme. Several Respondents perceived the role of the Prison Officer as a complicated one – on the one hand locking up prisoners yet on the other, demonstrating compassion and skill in the Programme Tutor role. For many Respondents, seeing a Prison Officer in the role of Tutor, and observing the students interacting in a relaxed and friendly way with Tutor Prison Officers, appeared to introduce an air of ‘humanity’ and ‘normality’ into the prison world. Prison Officers were complimented on their delivery of the programme, and as one Respondent perceptively remarked:- *‘I think that they should encourage more Prison Officers to play a part in this course. These are the guys with the authority in relation to the prisoners, and if they get involved, like the guys who took this course, and promote it the way that these guys did, that could well influence the attitude of the prisoners towards them, so they may not then be regarded as just ‘screws’, but as compassionate men who can encourage prisoners to benefit from the course.’* It was suggested by several Respondents that if more Prison Officers could become involved, then the programme could be delivered in more prisons to more prisoners.

All Respondents were fulsome in their praise for the **What Next** session, which proved very helpful for students and for two Respondents in very practical ways. Respondents felt that it was very helpful for them to know about which agencies could be of potential help to the students, so that they could be in a position to encourage the students to follow things up with relevant agencies upon release. One Respondent was quite annoyed that there was no Probation presence available in the January 2009 Belmarsh *FM* programme, as he argued that the Probation Service is a vital agency for most released prisoners, and one which can signpost to other agencies which may be able to assist with resettlement issues. Indeed, this is arguably the co-ordinating role of the Probation Officer, now known as the Offender Manager.

In terms of the **Assessing Areas for Change/Family Action Plan** sessions, with very few exceptions, Respondents felt confident about sharing their honest opinion with the student about their perception of the students’ problem areas, and reportedly, following consideration and discussion regarding differing perspectives, amicably agreed Family Action Plans were able to be devised. Of those who expressed some concern about this activity, one mother felt that, for her, the nature of the mother/son relationship made it difficult for her to be as forthright with her 23 year old son regarding her perception of his problem areas, based on his past behaviour, and she reported that he became quite upset when she suggested that she thought he was somewhat lacking in self-confidence. Where reluctance was expressed regarding this activity, this appeared to be based upon not wanting to upset the student. Mostly, however, Respondents welcomed this activity as an opportunity to have an honest exchange with the student and make an important contribution to the students’ future plans and aspirations. One Respondent expressed a request for more clearly worded forms relating to the scoring exercise, as she found them confusing and had to seek clarification before completing this exercise.

As will be seen from the responses under each *FM* programme heading, there is some reported inconsistency in Respondents receiving a copy of the Family Action Plan. Respondents either did not receive, or do not recall receiving, Family Action Plans from the September 2008 programme in Belmarsh; the November 2008 programme in Birmingham; the November 2008 programme in Wandsworth, and the February 2009 programme in Highpoint. Whilst Respondents on the February 2009 programme in Bristol did have a copy of the Family Action Plan in the session, they were apparently requested to hand them back prior to leaving the prison. As one of the Respondents suggested: *'It is very important to have a copy of the Action Plan, as a reminder of what you have done, and what is left to do.'* Clearly this is a practice issue for Safe Ground to follow up.

All the Respondents were eager to offer support and encouragement to the students in their efforts to learn, reflect upon their attitudes, relationships and past behaviour, and draw up realistic plans for the future. For some Respondents, their relationships with their related students had been severely tested in the past when they had felt disappointed and let down by them, and several relationships were at the 'last chance' stage at the point at which the student had been imprisoned. Understandably, for some Respondents, and reportedly their related students, the issue of practical demonstration of proof of improvement in attitudes and behaviour after release from prison was a very important issue, and some frustration was expressed regarding the timing of the programme, particularly from Respondents whose related students still had long periods of time to serve in prison. They felt that the programme should be undertaken as near the release date as possible, to allow the student to follow up their Family Action Plan, or if this was not possible, some means of reinforcement or refreshment of the learning be made available, to maintain the momentum of the positive impact of the programme. Whilst there seems to be good evidence of learning progression, there is an apparent problem of taking learning forward when students are transferred to other prisons. Is it within Safe Ground's area of influence to address this important issue?

Without exception, Respondents who attended the **Presentations**, expressed feelings of surprise, pride and enjoyment concerning their related students' demonstrated abilities as a result of participation in that activity.

All Respondents reported improvements in students' attitude, ability to communicate in writing, via the telephone and in discussion, as a result of participating in the programme. All had engaged in the four-letter exchange element of the programme with the student and thought this was a good idea. Several Respondents were impressed to observe in the students a greater acceptance of responsibility for past unacceptable personal and offending behaviour, and a greater awareness of, and a more serious future commitment to, family responsibilities. In several instances, there was reported improvement in communication between fathers and children as a result of the programme. Several Respondents reported the development in the student of the ability to listen to, and take into consideration, other people's perspectives.

Several Respondents commented that they were pleased that *Family Man* addressed the victim perspective, as it helped students become more aware that their relatives, friends, and children suffer collateral damage as a result of their crimes, and thus also

become victims. In policy terms, this also meets the desire of the Government, expressed in the Home Office's White Paper 'Justice for All' (2002), to move victims closer to the centre of the criminal justice system.

For some Respondents, the opportunity to spend time 'as a family' was very important, and very much welcomed, as they saw this as important from the children's perspective as well as from their own and the students'. There was a suggestion from one Respondent, for Safe Ground to consider whether it would be possible to include children in the programme if possible. This is clearly an important consideration in relation to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.

From the evidence obtained, it appears that most Respondents had the benefit of support from family, friends and/or work colleagues, in helping them to cope with their aspect of 'serving the sentence'. Other positive outcomes for several supporters were the friendships that were forged between some of them, which have continued beyond involvement in a programme, and via the P.A.C.T. Bristol Support Group. These supportive networks were greatly valued, so perhaps Safe Ground could consider whether there is a way of furthering support amongst Respondents generally.

Only one complaint – presented as '*more of a niggle than a complaint*' – was received from one Respondent who participated in the January 2009 Belmarsh programme, which referred to the type of food provided by the Prison Service. This is clearly not a criticism of the *FM* programme itself.

In terms of other suggestions for improvement, one Respondent indicated that she would have liked to have seen all of the '*Blinda*' video (not just a snapshot) and would have appreciated a copy of the *Selfish Giant* book so that she could use it herself with her children.

A final suggestion related to the issue of recognition of Respondents' participation in the programme. One Respondent felt that the supporters' role in the programme is a very important and significant one, and should, perhaps, be formally acknowledged, as is the student's participation, with a Certificate.

5. Conclusion

Without doubt, from the responses received during the course of this evaluation of the involvement of relatives, friends and supporters of prisoners throughout the eight *Family Man* programmes delivered across five Prisons between September 2008 and February 2009, the inclusion of such supporters is considered by them to be extremely important, and valued by prisoners and supporters alike. Given the complexity of the family relationships manifested in these interviews (including different children to different mothers, and step-families), and the challenging context in which *FM* is actually operating, the Respondents interviewed have demonstrated very clearly how positively they feel about what Safe Ground is doing within this reality, which they, of all people, know about. There is certainly evidence from this research that this approach is effective in encouraging and helping to maintain family and relationship links during imprisonment, which is so vital in terms of contributing to successful resettlement. Without exception, all of the contributors to this research urge that *Family Man* continues to be available to as many prisoners as possible, in as many

prisons as possible. In the words of one of the Respondents who contributed to this evaluation: *'It helps people to grasp the idea of what it is to be, and how they can be, a good family man.'*

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June 2009