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## Prison-based Family Support

### An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Safe Ground/Pact/Jigsaw Family Support Worker Pilot Role in four English Prisons during 2009-10

August 2010

#### Participating organisations

Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust): Belmarsh, Bristol & Wandsworth

Jigsaw: Leeds

Safe Ground: Fathers Inside (Leeds), and Family Man (Belmarsh, Bristol, Leeds & Wandsworth)

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**Professor Gwyneth Boswell, Dr. Fiona Poland & Avril Price**

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## Executive Summary

- ❖ The Family Support Worker (FSW) role has evolved from a partnership between the charities Pact and Safe Ground which, respectively, provide prison-based support and educative family relationships programmes to prisoners and their families. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS, Ministry of Justice) and the former Department of Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education) have funded the piloting of the FSW role in four English prisons between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010.
- ❖ The purpose of the FSW pilot was to test the potential for developing a viable responsive casework service to prisoners, their children, families and supporters. This evaluation draws on quantitative and qualitative data gained from FSWs, relevant prison staff, other involved professionals, prisoners, their families and supporters, to report on the **extent** of this potential and to inform the framework for a possible national model. Its key findings are summarised in the following paragraphs.
- ❖ Although the numbers of Services Users (SUs) and FSW practice differed somewhat across the four prisons, this was usually related to individual prison characteristics, indicating the need for the tailoring of a FSW service, wherever it is offered. However, the overall number of SUs reached (928) across a recorded 9-month period was almost double the predicted number, probably because about half of SU requests could be resolved on one occasion, while the other half necessitated continuing contact. A wide range of SUs was reached in terms of prisoner type, family/supporter type, gender and ethnic origin. **Referrals** to other agencies were also made in 57% of cases.
- ❖ By far the highest area of SU need lay in the category 'Prisoner/family contact', followed by those of 'Emotional/mental health', 'Children and Parenting' and 'Managing money'. Qualitative interviews and 'before and after' problem checklists with SUs left no room for doubt that all FSWs' services were very highly rated and appreciated, most respondents saying that they did not know from where else they could have obtained this kind of support. Prison staff also valued the FSW role and its contribution to prisoner stability.
- ❖ The maintenance of family ties is generally recognised as constituting a key factor in successful prisoner resettlement. Overall, evidence from the evaluation indicates a high need for the FSW role, which has proved extremely effective in contributing to such maintenance through the resolution of prisoner and family problems. Accordingly, with appropriate training and customisation, the role should certainly be extended across the prison estate.

# Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Safe Ground/Pact/Jigsaw Family Support Worker Pilot Role in four English Prisons during 2009-10

## 1. Background

1.1 The pilot Family Support Worker (FSW) posts at HMPs Belmarsh, Bristol and Wandsworth ran for a 12-month period from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010, and were funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Children and Families Pathway 6. The post at HMP Leeds ran for an 8-month period from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, and was funded by a Children, Young People and Families Grant from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (now the Department of Education).

1.2 The purpose of the pilot FSW post is to provide and develop a responsive casework service to prisoners, their children, families and supporters. The role was developed through a partnership between two voluntary organizations. Safe Ground runs two family and parenting programmes for prisoners, 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside'; the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact), provides a range of services to the children, families and friends of prisoners. The background to their joint development of the FSW role is described in paragraphs 1.3 – 1.6.

1.3 Safe Ground's and Pact's partnership approach has developed over the last four years, and was initially focused on encouraging and facilitating the active involvement of prisoners' partners and relatives in the Family Man programme, and on enhancing progression routes. The specific FSW role on Family Man was created during the development of the programme in consultation with Pact, Adfam, Relate and One plus One, who were commissioned to offer their expertise and advice as to how relatives and friends could be involved in this family relationships programme. As a result, the Family Man programme was revised in 2006-7, to include greater participation of relatives and partners, known as 'Supporters' (see **Appendix A**) and this development was positively evaluated (Boswell and Poland, 2007). The development was largely facilitated by Pact's existing Family Support Workers who were based in prison visitors centres. (Pact has, over the years, developed a range of practitioner roles, including those of Family Support Worker, Link Worker, Visitors Centre Manager, and Information and Support Worker). A specific role description describing the input to the Family Man programme was produced by Safe Ground and appended to the existing job descriptions for the individual member of staff deployed in each case. This was part of a much more extensive partnership relationship which also saw the two charities share policy and practice expertise and pool resources.

1.4 Following the successful trials of the revised Family Man programme in HMPs Belmarsh, Bristol, Birmingham, Highpoint, Leeds and Wandsworth, Safe Ground and Pact approached NOMS to explore the possibility of taking the role of the FSW further and trialling it on a full time basis in the 3 Pact prisons. In discussions with NOMS about the development of specifications for Visits Services, Pact recommended that a generic prison-based Family Support Worker role be developed which could become a commissionable service. Pact recognised that practitioner roles developed by the voluntary sector to work with prisoners' children and families were varied, and that a 'Family Support Worker' at one prison may in fact be very different from a post with the same job title at another, simply as a consequence of services developing independently of one another. Pact and Safe Ground proposed that the role should be one that is case-work based, taking referrals from prisoners, partners and relatives and supporters and which could, within its remit, act as the link into and from interventions and programmes such as Family Man, Fathers Inside, and other relationship and parenting programmes.

1.5 Pact subsequently developed a job description and person specification for the FSW role, drawing on its past development of such roles and wider knowledge, and appended to this the role description developed by Safe Ground. This combined job description constitutes the role referred to throughout this report as the 'Family Support Worker' (FSW).

1.6 Each of the prisons, of course, combines different characteristics. Three (Leeds, Bristol and Wandsworth) are Category 'B' prisons while Belmarsh is Category 'B', with a Category 'A' facility. All four prisons are 'local' and take both convicted and a (lower) proportion of remand prisoners. Each has a Visitors' Centre, those at Belmarsh, Bristol and Wandsworth being run and staffed by the 'Pact' charity. The Leeds Visitors' Centre is run by the 'Jigsaw' charity (see Dixey & Woodall, 2009). These Centres, the 'First Night' services, and each prison's induction processes play a key part in the initiation of contact between the FSWs and their Service Users. All four prisons run the 'Family Man' programme, and Leeds also runs the 'Fathers Inside' programme.

1.7 Each prison has been funded for 35 hours per week of FSW time, though the role itself is necessarily implemented in different ways and by different personnel at each prison.

- At **Bristol**, there are two FSWs, one who is also the Visitors' Centre Manager with other non-FSW responsibilities, and one Assistant FSW, employed for two days per week. They provide a 2-hour Family Information Session once a month, which also affords an extra prisoner visit, and take referrals from this session. (Unfortunately, due to prison exigencies, further discussed in Section 7.7, this session has recently ceased). Because families do not have to go through the Visitors' Centre to gain access to Prison Visits, the FSWs sometimes provide the

first point of prison contact with families by picking up people as they queue to go into these Visits. They also receive referrals from prisoner induction; telephone calls; the Visitors' Centre; 'Family Man'; and from the Offender Management Unit, which is piloting a 'layered' system of referral (NOMS, 2009) according to prisoner risk and need levels on the 7 pathways to reducing re-offending (Home Office, 2004). Thus, if a prisoner has an issue or problem relating to the Children and Families Pathway, or indeed to other pathways with which the FSW might be able to assist or appropriately refer elsewhere, a 'layered' referral form will be completed and sent to the FSW for attention.

- At **Belmarsh**, two FSWs work for one day and four days a week respectively. The former also occupies the role of Visitors' Centre Manager, while the latter also fulfils the FSW role for the rolling 'Family Man' programme. Over the 12-month period in question, four social work students and some Visitors' Centre volunteers have also been deployed to carry out some of the FSW work. Referrals come through the Visitors' Centre; Pact's [court-based support service \(where new arrivals are seen in the courts before they are transferred to the prison\)](#); 'Family Man'; prison staff; by telephone; and through a 'locked box' system on wings, where prisoners place their requests.
- At **Wandsworth**, there is one full-time FSW, who also occupies the 'Family Man' FSW role, which has run on one occasion over the 12-month period but is also due to become 'rolling'. Referrals come via the Visitors' Centre; the 'First Night' service; the 'Family Man' programme; a range of prison staff; The Offender Management Unit; the Children's Advocacy Worker; and by telephone.
- At **Leeds**, a single FSW was appointed in mid-August 2009 but, since her brief was to work more closely with prisoners to develop Family Learning opportunities, it later became necessary for another Jigsaw Centre worker to take over some of her direct FSW work with families. Referrals come via Resettlement Assessment forms; [peer support volunteer prisoners](#); the prison's 'First Night' service; wing staff; and the 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' programmes.

**1.5** The work of the Leeds FSWs is overseen by a manager from the Jigsaw charity, and that of the Belmarsh, Bristol and Wandsworth FSWs by a Pact charity manager.

**1.6** The Leeds FSW brief differed from that of the other three prisons in that [it operated to separate policies and procedures, and was focused on Learning & Skills/Family Learning outcomes rather than the broader pathways to reducing re-offending outcomes](#). However, all parties agreed at the outset that it made sense for the evaluation methods to be standard for all 4 prisons and for the findings to be presented in a single report, in order to widen the basis for assessing the best methods of practice for the FSW role.

## 2. Evaluation Purpose

2.1 The overall purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the Family Support Worker (FSW) pilot role for prisoners, their children, families and supporters. This evaluation report provides indicative evidence of achievement and areas for development in this role, based upon the FSW job description. It draws upon this evidence to inform the framework for a national FSW model.

## 3. Context for the Evaluation

3.1 Following the interim report prepared by the Research team at the end of March 2010, the present report provides a final set of findings, based upon:

- Quantitative data on a total of 928 service users, returned by the FSWs to the research team between mid-September 2009 and mid-June 2010 (a total of 9 months). This is derived firstly from a one-page FSW session sheet, piloted and agreed with the FSWs, which records service user/prisoner characteristics, the categories of issues/problems they have identified, and the action/referral undertaken by the FSW. Secondly, the service user is invited by the FSW to complete a checklist of issues/problems and to rate their severity on a scale of 1 - 5, both at the beginning of their contact with the FSW and again at the end of their contact. This affords a measure of the extent to which service users' issues/problems are resolved through this contact. At this stage, service users were also asked for their permission to be telephoned by a member of the Research Team for an in-depth interview about their experiences.
- A total of 128 qualitative interviews conducted during the same period with all FSWs, samples of relevant prison staff, prisoner and family/supporter FSW service users and non-FSW service users, and those who have acted as supporters on Safe Ground's 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' programmes.

3.2 It is important to note that the quantitative data appearing in the Tables set out in the sections below are only as reliable and as complete as the information entered and returned to the Research Team by the FSWs and, in some cases, by other Visitors' Centre staff, social work students and volunteers. There are a number of gaps (though these reduced considerably over the second half of the study) and, in some cases, FSWs were not able to complete their session sheets at all. The FSWs explain that this is often because their contacts with service users are too brief to be able to elicit all the information required, especially where it is personal and potentially sensitive, such as that relating to ethnic origin and offence type.

## 4. Characteristics of Service Users (SUs) receiving FSW Support

4.1 Tables 1 – 8 below show the numbers and characteristics of SUs receiving the pilot FSW service. They each refer to a 6½ month study period for Leeds (mid-September 2009 – end March 2010) and to a 9 month period between mid-September 2009 and mid-June 2010 for the other three prisons. Trends remain similar to those identified in the interim report prepared in March 2010. Although no real connection can be made between these data and the overall prison populations, it may serve as useful contextual background to record here that the four total prison populations at the end of the respective data collection periods were as follows: **Leeds** 1,137; **Bristol** 612; **Belmarsh** 822 ; **Wandsworth** (the largest prison in the UK) 1,572. All were operating at close to full capacity.

**Table 1: Number & type of FSW Service User at first contact**

PRISON	LEEDS	BRISTOL	BELMARSH	WANDSWORTH	TOTALS FOR ALL ALL 4 PRISONS
TYPE OF SERVICE USER AT FIRST CONTACT					
Prisoner	102	103	128	68	401
Other SU*	30	294	126	77	527
<b>TOTAL SUs</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

\*Within the 'Other SU' category are included 23 SUs who asked for and received individual FSW services in addition to the generalized FSW services they received as 'Supporters' on Safe Ground's 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' prison-based family relationship and parenting programmes. (See also subsection 1.3 and Appendix A)

4.2 Table 1 above shows that data on a total of 928 SUs were returned by the end of the study period. Leeds' reported total of 132 SUs exceeded a revised projection of 120 (following a recalculation of potential prisoner SUs from an initial 180). The total of 796 for the other 3 prisons, is well over double Pact's projected number of 350. At Leeds, in accordance with that FSW's brief, it can be seen that the predominant SU was the prisoner. At Belmarsh and Wandsworth, the numbers of SUs who were family/friends/other supporters slightly exceeded the numbers of SUs who were prisoners. At Bristol, the family/friends/other supporters group was almost treble the number of prisoner SUs but, more recently, this trend is changing as FSWs work more on the prison wings. The range of SU types and totals in this Table relate to a number of variables across the four prisons - notably, rate of session form completion and return, referral system efficiency, available FSW hours, and individual prison context. Importantly, also, each SU constitutes a 'case', which can range from one brief contact taking two minutes, to 20 or more contacts involving other family members and relevant professionals, taking several hours in total.

**4.3 Table 2** below shows that, overall, the cases involving one contact, and those involving two or more, are about equal. Broken down, Leeds has a considerably higher number of cases involving one contact; Belmarsh has a slightly higher number of such cases; Bristol and Wandsworth each have a slightly higher number of cases involving two or more contacts. It should be emphasized here that many cases only require simple information about visiting procedures, bringing clothes in to prisoners etc, which can be provided in a single contact, while others are much more complex and may require anything up to 20 or more contacts, involving phone calls to relatives, referrals to other agencies, solicitors and so on. The average direct contact time, in minutes, with SUs across the study period was: Leeds 21; Bristol 22; Belmarsh 29; and Wandsworth 49 minutes, **but this does not include additional time spent contacting other individuals and agencies in order to resolve problems.** The differentials in average contact time with SUs in general appear to reflect the numbers of FSW ‘bodies’ available at each location which, despite in theory amounting to one full-time equivalent (FTE) at each prison, tended to work out in terms of more people seeing more cases. In the case of Belmarsh, the work of the FTE was considerably supplemented by that of social work students and volunteers. In the case of Wandsworth, the single FSW’s workload was considerably relieved by the existence of a relatively well-resourced Pact Visitors Centre team, a First Night team, and also a Children’s Advocacy Worker (funded by Children in Need), who are able to pick up and solve the (thousands of) more straightforward cases, so that those filtering through to the FSW are fewer in number but more challenging and time-consuming in content.

**Table 2: Number of single & continuing contacts with SUs**

<b>PRISON</b>	<b>LEEDS</b>	<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>BELMARSH</b>	<b>WANDSWORTH</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>Cases with one contact</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>467</b>
<b>Cases with 2+ contacts</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>461</b>
<b>TOTAL CONTACTS</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

**4.4 Table 3** below indicates the number and type of first contacts made with the FSW over the study period. The predominantly prisoner contact at Leeds is face-to-face. There is more face-to-face than telephone contact on the first occasion at Belmarsh, and this is divided between prisoner and non-prisoner SUs, the latter usually making contact at the Visitors’ Centre. A small number of SUs had also made first contact by e-mail, and this is a trend which will perhaps gradually increase. At Wandsworth, contact with both prisoner and non-prisoner SUs is predominantly face-to-face. At Bristol, less use is made by SUs of the Visitors’ Centre (because, unlike the other prisons, visitors do not have to pass through it or register there, on their way to visits in the main prison) and so the majority of first contacts are made by telephone. Where an induction or ‘layered’ referral asks the FSW to contact relatives who then do not reply to telephone contact, a letter is sent with information about Pact and FSW services.

**Table 3: Number & type of first contacts made with the FSW**

PRISON	LEEDS	BRISTOL	BELMARSH	WANDSWORTH	TOTALS
<b>TYPE OF 1<sup>st</sup> CONTACT</b>					
Face-to-face	118	165	175	100	558
Telephone	14	218	74	45	351
Letter	-	10	1	-	11
E-mail	-	4	4	-	8
<b>TOTAL CONTACTS</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

**4.5 Table 4** below depicts the gender of the SU making first contact with the FSW. The figures reflect the predominantly male prisoner SU at Leeds, while FSWs at Bristol have first contact with more female SUs, usually by telephone. The trend at Belmarsh and Wandsworth has moved in the last four months from a slight predominance of females at first contact to a greater predominance of males (usually but not exclusively prisoners) at first contact.

**Table 4: Gender breakdown of SUs at first contact with the FSW**

PRISON	LEEDS	BRISTOL	BELMARSH	WANDSWORTH	TOTALS
<b>GENDER</b>					
Female	26	239	107	60	432
Male	106	158	147	85	496
<b>TOTAL SUs</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

**4.6 Table 5** below shows the types of SU as they defined themselves in relation to the prisoner or their family (if SU was a prisoner). In about one tenth of prisoner SU cases, requests to the FSW were not family contact-related (centring, for example, around clothing, money or legal issues) and so these have been placed in the Not Applicable (N/A) category. However, it can be seen that the predominant category, comprising around one third of SUs is that of Partner (incorporating spouse and girl/boyfriend and including two gay partners), and the second highest category is that of Mother (of the prisoner), comprising just under a fifth of SUs. These SUs, together with other close family members, often need emotional as well as practical support from the FSW, because of the difficulties ensuing from the separations caused by imprisonment.

Table 5: Relationship of SU to prisoner/family member

PRISON	LEEDS	BRISTOL	BELMARSH	WANDSWORTH	TOTALS
RELATIONSHIP OF SU TO PRISONER/FAMILY					TOTALS
Partner*	25	151	72	57	305
Mother	12	88	42	26	168
Father*	18	17	33	15	83
Adult son*/ /daughter	26	24	10	10	70
Sibling*	3	14	11	8	36
Other**	5	41	34	12	92
N/A	12	18	48	15	93
Not recorded	31	44	4	2	81
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

\*Includes prisoners. \*\* Includes, for e.g., grandparents, friends, ex-partners

Table 6: Breakdown of self-defined ethnic origin of SUs (in order of frequency)

PRISON	LEEDS	BRISTOL	BELMARSH	WANDSWORTH	TOTALS
SELF-DEFINED ETHNIC ORIGIN					TOTALS
White British	75	100	108	50	333
Black British	2	6	19	11	38
African- -Caribbean	-	4	8	4	16
Asian	6	3	2	2	13
Black African	5	1	2	4	12
White Irish	2	2	4	2	10
British Asian	-	1	4	4	9
Polish	1	-	-	8	9
European	2	3	1	-	6
Mixed race	2	2	-	1	5
Chinese	1*	1*	-	1*	3
Iranian	1	1	-	1	3
Czech Republic	-	-	-	3	3
Algerian	-	-	-	3	3
Mediterran- -ean	-	-	2	-	2
Malaysian	-	-	-	1*	1
Other (see para.4.7)	1	4	3	13	21
Not recorded	34	269	101	37	441
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

\*Friends who could translate, or the prison translation line/service, were used with these SUs

**4.7 Table 6** above shows that over one third of these SUs define themselves as White British (includes one Scottish and 3 Welsh) but that there is a spread of other ethnic categories across all the prisons. The ‘Other’ category consists of SUs of whom there was only one in each of the following self-defined categories: Albanian; Black African American; Colombian; Dubaian; Eritrean; Indian; Italian; Kurdish; Latino; Lithuanian; Muslim (*sic*); Nepalese; Portuguese; Romanian; Somalian; South African; South American; Traveller; Turk; Vietnamese; White Canadian. Since the interim report in March, the overall proportion of reported Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) SUs has increased from 12½% to 16½%, but remains relatively low in a national context of 27% BME prisoners (Ministry of Justice 2010) and their families. Within this overall percentage, however, it is worthy of note that at Wandsworth, the only prison where the number of recorded BME prisoners exceeded the number whose ethnic origin was not recorded, this number represented 40%, and so clearly the BME population was being reached there. The BME population within the total ‘Not recorded’ number of 441 in **Table 6** may well account for further SUs in this category overall. It should be noted that this last figure particularly reflects the Bristol and Belmarsh non-recordings in the context of the two highest caseloads, which partly relate to the difficulties of obtaining sensitive information during short periods of contact, and partly (in the case of Belmarsh) to students and volunteers not completing session sheets as fully as the FSWs. Nonetheless, the FSWs’ recording of ethnic origin did improve and increase during the second half of the study; it now remains important for them to be vigilant about monitoring their practice in this area to ensure that they are making their service accessible to this ‘hard-to-reach’ group.

**4.8** The figures at **Table 7** below relate to prisoner and family/supporter SUs who told the FSW that they had either birth children or children of the family under the age of 18 years. This amounts to slightly less than one third of the total number of SUs. The figure needs to be viewed with caution as it is not always clear that the question has been asked of the SUs or, if it has, they may not always have chosen to reveal that they have children. However, it remains a sufficiently significant figure for the FSWs to have the category of ‘Children/Parenting’ among the key areas in which they offer support or targeted referral.

**Table 7: SUs declaring children under the age of 18 yrs**

<b>PRISON</b>	<b>LEEDS</b>	<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>BELMARSH</b>	<b>WANDSWORTH</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>Total SUs</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>
<b>SUs declaring Children &lt; 18 yrs</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>291</b>

4.9 The breakdown of prisoner types provided in **Table 8** below shows that the FSW service is provided to sentenced and remand prisoners alike and likewise to their families/supporters. It suggests that the service is also provided in respect of a greater number of sentenced than remand prisoners, in parallel with the proportions in the prison system overall. However, it should be noted that in just over a fifth of cases, this information has not been recorded. The same is true of offence type for all, and sentence type for convicted prisoners, though session sheets show that the service has reached a wide spectrum of prisoners and families/supporters, where the prisoners' offences range from serious violence, through theft, to driving and debt, and to those serving sentences from less than 6 months to Life.

**Table 8: Type of prisoner SU, or prisoner in contact with community-based SU**

<b>PRISON</b>	<b>LEEDS</b>	<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>BELMARSH</b>	<b>WANDSWORTH</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>TYPE OF PRISONER SU, OR PRISONER IN CONTACT WITH SU</b>					
<b>Remand</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>66 *</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>Sentenced</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>Recalled</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Not recorded</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>928</b>

\* Includes 2 prisoners awaiting extradition and 2 immigration detainees

4.10 Overall, **Tables 1 - 8** above indicate that all the FSWs are providing a service to a wide range of Service Users via several channels of referral and communication and that, in half of these cases, the service continues beyond the first contact. Practice across the four prisons differs, for reasons which are usually related to the prison's own characteristics. The numbers of SUs reached differs for similar reasons, but the fact that the overall number is very much higher than predicted is a credit to the FSW service.

## 5. Key Areas of Support provided by the FSWs

5.1 Table 9 below sets out the key areas in which FSWs have provided support for their SUs, in the order in which they appear on the FSW session sheets and the SU problem-solving Star sheets. Numbers of referrals to other relevant agencies are given beside the session focus area numbers. Referrals are channelled through one of three avenues – contact by the FSW with the agency or prison department concerned, in order to feed back information to the SU; direct referral of the SU to the agency concerned; or ‘signposting’ to the agency, often accompanied by written information.

**Table 9: FSW session focus areas and referrals**

PRISON SESSION FOCUS AREA	LEEDS		BRISTOL		BELMARSH		WANDSWORTH		TOTALS	
	FOCUS AREA	REFER -ALS	FOCUS AREA	REFER -ALS	FOCUS AREA	REFER -ALS	FOCUS AREA	REFER -ALS	FOC- US AREA	REFER -ALS
1.Managing money	5	1	70	57	49	38	12	6	136	102
2.Accommodation	7	4	36	21	42	43	7	5	92	73
3.Relationships/social networks	8	1	18	5	45	13	20	7	91	26
4.Children/parenting	22	10	57	44	49	29	21	14	149	97
5.Prisoner/family contact	81	8	265	137	174	133	98	20	618	298
6.Drug misuse	4	3	13	7	14	10	1	-	32	20
7.Alcohol misuse	4	2	9	4	7	7	2	2	22	15
8.Physical health	5	2	32	22	28	26	18	11	83	61
9.Emotional/mental health	5	2	71	37	64	31	31	25	171	95
10.Motivation/taking responsibility (includes attitudes, thinking, behaviour)	1	1	7	2	31	6	3	-	42	9
11.Meaningful use of time (includes education, training, employment)	3	1	18	5	26	16	15	11	62	33
12.Other *	3	1	20	20	28	21	23	27	74	69
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>1,572</b>	<b>898</b>

\*Includes, for example, legal issues, complaints, translation needs

**5.2** Again, it is important to note that these figures are based on those supplied by the FSWs and may not necessarily reflect the full volume of work undertaken. Additionally, the fact that not all FSW work leads to referrals (which took place in around 57% of cases) does not mean that the FSW made no response to the SU's problem – in almost all cases it was clear that they had provided immediate verbal or written advice which, often, was sufficient to address the issue in question.

**5.3** It is apparent that by far the highest area of SU need is in Category 5 'Prisoner/Family contact', and that this also is the highest area of referral (in about half of the cases) to other relevant agencies or prison departments - for example, the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, Visits sections within the prison concerned, the Ormiston (now POPS) Prisoners' Families' Helpline. The second highest area is in Category 9 'Emotional/Mental Health', which also triggered referrals in about half of cases, often to internal/external Mental Health Teams, or to Listeners or Samaritans. Frequently, however, the 'listening ear' of the FSW afforded sufficient resolution, making referral unnecessary.

**5.4** The third highest area of SU need lies in Category 4 'Children and Parenting', where there were high referral levels to Children's Services, Sure Start, national, local or in-house children's charities, prison-based Family Days, Homework Clubs, and the 'Family Man' programme. Other high areas of need included Category 1 'Managing Money', Category 2 'Accommodation', Category 3 'Relationships/social networks', and Category 8, 'Physical Health' in that order. Appropriate, often practically-focused referrals were made in respect of most of these, though for 'Relationships/social networks', direct FSW advice appeared to suffice for the most part.

**5.5** As indicated below **Table 9**, the 'Other' category contained a range of needs and referrals, often centering around legal issues, translation requests, complaints about the prison system and so on. For example, a gay prisoner felt he was being discriminated against and sought and was given advice about seeking a prison transfer, as well as the wing officer being notified. In the 'Motivation/taking responsibility' category, FSWs were often helping prisoners, in particular, to think about how best to support their families from and after prison and, sometimes related to this, were helping both them and family SUs to move towards education or employment opportunities under the 'Meaningful use of time' category. Relatively few SUs requested help with drug or alcohol misuse (probably because other facilities, such as CARATS, dealt with these issues), but where these requests were received, around two thirds were channelled to relevant sources of assistance.

**5.6** Overall, then, a large number of SUs have sought and received direct help or referral for a wide range of needs, but particularly those involving prisoner/family contact, emotional/mental health, children/parenting and managing money. The quality of the support they received from the FSWs is the subject of the next Section.

## 6. Extent to which Service Users felt supported by FSWs

**6.1 'Before and after' FSW service ratings:** Out of the 928 service users whose details were returned, FSWs were able to work long enough with and gain consent from just over one third (316) SUs to complete a 'before FSW' 'Star' chart, identifying and rating the extent of any problems they were experiencing (see **Appendix B**). Of these, 111, (Leeds 24; Belmarsh 37; Bristol 34; Wandsworth 16) or 12% of the total number of SUs, were willing, able and contactable to complete 'after FSW' 'Star' charts (see **Appendix C**). Here, they rated the extent to which their issues/problems had reduced following FSW intervention. The problems identified were ranked in virtually the same order as those at **Table 9** above, with the category of 'Prisoner/family contact' predominating, again followed by 'Emotional/mental health', 'Children/parenting' and 'Managing money'. A minority of problems (8%) had stayed the same, or reduced by just one point on the 5-point scale (16%) notably in the 'Prisoner/family contact' and 'Social networks/relationships' areas, perhaps not surprising over a period involving stressful separation. A high majority of problems (74%) across the board had, however, reduced by at least 2 points on the 5-point scale. Asked to rate the extent to which the FSW had helped them on a scale of 1-5, none gave a rating of below 3 'A fair amount', and 82% gave a rating of 4 'A lot', or 5 'Solved my problem(s)'. Whilst all of these high ratings provide a clear accolade to the FSW services, the fact that they only represent 12% of the overall total of SU views means that they must be seen as providing a quantitative, underpinning flavour rather than a definitive finding of SU ratings of the FSW service, the impact of which is more fully illustrated within the qualitative findings set out in the following paragraphs.

**6.2 Qualitative interviews:** Reflecting the main characteristics and needs of service-users described in Section 4, 26 prisoner SUs and 48 visiting SUs were interviewed for the FSW evaluation. Of these, 13 prisoners had completed Safe Ground's 'Family Man' or 'Fathers Inside' programmes (on both of which a FSW service is provided) and 14 visiting SUs had acted as 'Supporters' for men on these programmes (see Section 1.2). To provide a level of contrast, 11 prisoners and 5 relatives who had not used the FSW service were also interviewed. SUs were asked to indicate their willingness to be interviewed by the Research Team when completing their 'Star' charts, and relative/supporter SUs were simultaneously asked to provide their contact details for a telephone interview. Prisoner non-SUs were approached at random by FSWs on prison wings, and visiting non-SUs by researchers when the former were waiting to go into a visit. (See **Appendix D** for a breakdown of total interview numbers and types across the four prisons). The interviews were semi-structured, lasting on average for 45 minutes. Questions centred around the nature and quality of support respondents felt they had received from the FSW. Those who had not used the service were asked what they knew of it and from what alternative sources they obtained their own support. Key findings from these qualitative interviews are set out in the remaining paragraphs of this section.

**6.3 Experiences of being helped by the FSW:** For all 90 interviewees, this had been their first experience of being offered the help of a FSW. These encounters had mainly taken place either at the Visitors' Centre, on the Wing following induction or prison officer referral, or through contact with the FSW on the 'Family Man' or 'Fathers Inside' programmes. Some prisoners had heard of the FSW through their families or other prisoners, and had asked for contact; and some families had received Pact or Jigsaw information leaflets and had telephoned the FSW for advice. Types of help and advice sought and received ranged from straightforward information provision about prison visits and regulations, through passing urgent messages between family members and prisoners, advice about what to tell children about their father's whereabouts, providing generalized emotional support, to relevant agency referral for serious (occasionally life-threatening) matters of prisoner or family physical/mental health or child safeguarding. When asked if the help or advice they had received from the FSW was useful, all interviewees except for two prisoners who said that they had not received answers to their queries, replied 'Yes'. When asked to rate on a scale of 1 - 5 (where 1 = not at all important and 5 = extremely important) how important they felt it was for prisoners, their families and friends to be offered such help and advice, 8% rated this at 4, and 92% at 5. Their appreciation of the FSWs and their work was almost universal and, in many cases, nothing less than heartfelt. Summaries of the responses of prisoner SUs and visiting SUs appear respectively in the following two subsections.

**6.4 Responses of prisoner SUs to the FSW service:** The prisoner SUs, especially 'first-timers', particularly appreciated practical information from FSWs about prison and visits procedures. Other practical help, such as conveying glasses to a prisoner lacking his contact lenses, or persuading visits staff to admit a family whose booking was not showing on the system, was also much valued. Many welcomed the chance to talk about family issues with a FSW who could then directly contact their families, as a result of which several prisoners were reunited with their families, including children.

*Leeds prisoner SU: She got the contact going between me and my family. She tells you straight what she can and can't do. You are safe in her hands – she makes you feel that.*

Prisoner SUs appreciated the quick and efficient response of the FSWs in contrast to the prison application procedure which they frequently found produced no response. This provided them with reassurance and confidence in the FSW. Some reported feeling disconnected and isolated from the outside world and so appreciated FSW assistance when they were unable to do things for themselves. Many were also very grateful for the support afforded to their relatives by the FSW. The FSWs' non-judgemental approach and the fact that they are not prison staff was much remarked on:

*Bristol prisoner SU: He does everything that needs to be done – everything he says he will do. It's much better that he's not a prison officer. You can trust him more because he's coming in from outside and he only comes here because he's trying to help people all the time.*

**6.5 Responses of visiting SUs to the FSW service:** All these respondents, without exception, appreciated knowing that FSWs would provide them with accurate information, which did not appear to be forthcoming from any other source. A great deal of worry and sometimes exasperation were expressed about where their loved one had been taken and why he hadn't been in contact - often to do with the delay in getting registered on the prison pin phone system. They frequently did not know what to do next, or which way to turn in what, for them, was a highly distressing situation, especially for those who had no previous experience of prisons. Thus, it was a great relief to them to learn of the existence of a specific Family Support service, which could offer both practical and emotional support, as well as signposting them to other sources of help and advice.

***Belmarsh mother (registered disabled):** Oh yes, all three of them were very helpful indeed. They gave me all of the information I needed and used to take me in and out of the prison and organize my taxi home.*

***Wandsworth partner:** Help over the visits was very much appreciated, and the FSW gave me a lot of emotional support when my mother was ill....She used to send me e-mails with contacts for people I could call if I needed them.....She also used to update me about activities that were taking place in the Pact Centre for families.*

The FSWs' role in providing a personal link with these SUs' relatives and friends in prison was also often highlighted. The fact that the FSW could move between themselves by telephone and the prisoner face-to-face meant that they felt more connected to the prisoner and he to them. Specific anxieties, such as those about health problems, could be quickly alleviated by the FSW's ability to 'bridge the gap' between prison and home.

***Leeds wife and mother of 2 prisoners:** I was worried about my husband being poorly and just needed to know that he was OK. I'd not had contact with him over Christmas because for one thing the VO was late, and because of the bad weather, so I'd not seen him for 3 weeks and I knew he was due to go to the outside hospital. The FSW went to see him and she was able to tell me that he was OK. She is a very important link between myself and my husband. She's just so helpful and kind generally - she's even been able to help my son with a few issues. If she wasn't there, I don't know how we'd manage.*

**6.6 Referrals by the FSW to other organizations or individuals:** As was true of the total SU population (see Section 5, Table 9), in just over half of cases, FSWs had referred SUs to other organizations or individuals who could offer them additional, or more targeted help in accordance with their needs. Debt counselling, accommodation and legal advice were regular features of such referral, but more specific needs, such as support for a prisoner SU with Asperger's syndrome, were also met in this way. In the remaining cases, referral had either not appeared necessary, had been offered but declined by the SU or, in a minority of cases, the FSWs had, themselves, liaised with other agencies,

where SUs were, for various reasons, unable to do so for themselves. In one case, the FSW negotiated directly with the local council and successfully prevented a man's wife and baby daughter from being evicted after he was sent to prison. In another case, the FSW assisted a prisoner's child in foster care from a distance, by emailing the child's social worker (at that worker's request) with internet resources about telling children a parent is in prison, and ideas for work she could do around the emotional impact of parental imprisonment. FSWs also offered a more generalized referral service through the 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' 'What Next' sessions (see Section 6.9 for more detail and **Appendix E** for a list of the attending agencies), and in the case of Bristol, through the monthly Information Session for visiting SUs. A small number of SUs indicated dissatisfaction at not receiving the help they had hoped for from these referrals, and the FSWs themselves expressed some frustration at not always hearing of referral outcomes. Overall, however, this developing facet of their work has proved a real strength of FSW activity.

**Table 10: Difference made by FSW service to SUs, the prisoner's children, or other family members (n = 90)**

REPORTED DIFFERENCES FOLLOWING FSW SERVICES	% OF SUs REPORTING DIFFERENCE	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
To SU	72	<i>Belmarsh partner: When you speak with the FSW, she makes you feel as if you are the only and most important person at that point in time, and she totally concentrates on the problem you have, gives you her whole attention, and that was so helpful</i>
To SU's/prisoner's children	35	<i>Wandsworth partner: The FSW was able to tell us what we needed to do for our grand-daughter to be able to re-establish contact with her grand-dad. This got things moving straight away.</i>
To other family members	33	<i>Leeds prisoner SU: The FSW made a big difference by phoning my parents and girlfriend and arranging visits</i>
To all the above	31	<i>Bristol prisoner SU: When I first came in, it was such a shock, no-one knew what was happening, but the FSW helped to put all our minds at rest</i>
No reported differences	6	
Not applicable	6	
TOTAL reporting a difference	94	

**6.7 Effect on SUs of the FSW service:** SU respondents were asked if the help/advice they had received from the FSW had made any difference to them, their/the prisoner's

children, or other family members. **Table 10** above sets out their responses.

The 'Not Applicable' categories in **Tables 10-12** refer to a small number of Supporters on the 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' programmes, who did not always take up the offer of FSW help. Those SU respondents who had asked for or sought help were further asked whether the FSW's response had made them more confident about maintaining contact with their partner/relative/friend, or about maintaining contact with the prisoner and his children, or between the prisoner and others in his family. Their responses, with associated quotations, are represented in **Table 11** below.

**Table 11: Increase to SUs' confidence about maintaining contact between themselves/prisoner/family/children following FSW service. (NB: n = 85 since 5 respondents came into the 'Not Applicable' category, as explained above)**

INCREASE IN CONFIDENCE ABOUT MAINTAINING CONTACT FOLLOWING FSW SERVICES	% OF SUs REPORTING INCREASE IN CONFIDENCE	COMMENTS ON INCREASE IN CONFIDENCE
Between SU & prisoner or partner/relative (if SU is a prisoner)	70	<i>Wandsworth mother: I just knew that I could get in contact with the FSW and that she would help us with any booking problem, and she could also go and see that our son was alright. It was the reassurance that was very helpful to us, because we worry about him so much.</i>
Between prisoner & his children	36	<i>Leeds partner: My husband, our daughter and myself, we are a family, and we really should be together and it's so hard when you're not. Knowing there are people who can help you keep in contact with your relative in prison, and able to help you when you have problems, is very good.</i>
Between prisoner & other family members	34	<i>Bristol prisoner SU: I was reasonably confident anyway, but the FSW helped me think more about the importance of contact with my Mum and Nan.</i>
Across all 3 forms of contact	31	<i>Belmarsh prisoner SU: The answer's 'Yes' because no prison officer could have done it. She (the FSW) was very good at it.</i>
No reported increase	6	
<b>TOTAL reporting an increase</b>	<b>94</b>	

The two sets of percentage figures in **Tables 10** and **11** above are clearly similar. They show that the FSW service has a consistent and very considerable effect on these SUs, making a difference to their and their families' lives in respect of coping with the consequences of a prison sentence, and increasing their confidence about maintaining family ties during this difficult time. In some cases it just took the brief intervention of the FSW, or the reassuring knowledge that they were available if needed, to put prisoners and their families back on course to self-sufficient and effective contact. The final question relating to the effect on SUs of the FSW service, invited them to rate their levels of satisfaction with that service on a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 = not at all satisfied and 5 = extremely satisfied. **Table 12** below depicts these findings.

**Table 12: SU ratings of their satisfaction levels with the FSW service (n = 90)**

<i>Not at all satisfied... ..Extremely satisfied</i>						
<b>Rating scale</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>SU ratings (as % of 90)</b>	-	4	6	8	79	3

Clearly these were very high levels of satisfaction with the FSW service. Several of the 79% scoring 5 said that they would like to score 5+ or 10! The only SUs scoring less than 3 were those prisoners who said they had not had responses to their requests. Taking **Tables 10, 11** and **12** together, it is apparent that the FSW services in these four prisons have made a real impact on those who have used them and have helped prisoners, their children, families and supporters to maintain their ties.

**6.8 Availability of alternative sources of help or advice:** Users and non-users of the FSW service were all asked whether they knew of other sources of help and advice to which they could turn if there was no FSW service in the prison. A total of 19% of users said that they might turn to other sources – these were mainly ‘Family Man’ or ‘Fathers Inside’ prisoner students who felt that they could turn to their programme tutors, and a minority who would turn to prison or probation staff or inmate ‘Listeners’. However, the majority of users (81%) said that they did not know of any other service which would meet their particular needs for specialized information and communications between prisoners and their families. Almost none of this group reported any meaningful contact with a Probation Officer/Offender Manager, and few to whom it applied (*where prisoners were serving 12 months or over*) reported meaningful involvement in sentence planning. Both the family/supporter SUs and the prisoner SUs from all four prisons generally took the view expressed by one of them:

*Leeds prisoner SU: I wouldn't have known where else to go for the help that she has given us.*

Most of the 16 non-FSW users indicated that they solved any problems within the family, and some also did report help from their Probation Officers, but most were also aware of the FSW's role and willingness to help, should they ever need it, and believed in its importance to prisoners and families generally:

*Bristol non-SU friend: I know where they are if I need them. I've heard they do a really good job.*

*Belmarsh non-SU visitor: I'd say the FSW service is essential.*

**6.9 Prisoners and their Supporters on the Safe Ground programmes:** Those prisoner respondents who had been students on the Family Man or Fathers Inside programmes were all appreciative of the service they received from the FSW, both in terms of their individual support, motivation and encouragement during the programmes, and their organization of the 'What Next' session (which brings relevant agencies into the prison so that FM/FI prisoners and supporters can seek advice and referral in respect of resettlement plans). Many spoke of insights they had gained into their own behaviour, into family matters, how their imprisonment impacted upon partners/family/supporters, how better to communicate with their children, and increased self-confidence as a result. They valued the FSW's presence on the programme.

*Wandsworth FM prisoner SU: She (FSW) made me feel comfortable and confident that I could approach her about anything without feeling I was being judged. She is a very helpful and pleasant person and I appreciated her being involved in Family Man.*

A small number had moved on to become prison 'Listeners' or 'Insiders' or mentors to students on subsequent programmes. One of these latter, who had also written a letter of appreciation to the FSW (seen by the researchers) for the negotiation she engaged in with his children's school to ensure that the children could have authorized absences to attend both the FM Family Day and weekday visits, described his progression to the mentoring role thus:

*Belmarsh FM prisoner SU: As a FM student, I realized that my actions not only affected me but the ones I love – probably them more so – and before the course it was all about me. It's helped me to realize that it's down to me as to what paths I take, and I can tell you that all the paths I choose from now on will be better ones than my choices in the past. As a Mentor, it's been brilliant for me to be able to help guys on this last course to learn what I did from it.*

This prisoner is currently applying for funding to undertake an Open University degree Foundation module, following opportunities identified through the 'What Next' session, arranged by the FSW. Visiting SUs were also helped by the 'What Next' sessions, as the following example shows:

**Leeds FI partner/supporter:** *On the 'What Next' day, we went to the desks where 'X' organisation was, the Job Centre and the Children's Centre. My partner got information about jobs and I got some very helpful information about 'X' organisation, which has encouraged me to have some training from them to become a Volunteer with them, which I'm hoping might lead me into a job eventually. I've done the training for working with adults, but I can't start the work until my partner leaves prison. The Children's Centre people were helpful too, because they made a referral for me to Sure Start who came and fitted a safety gate and fire guard for me, free of charge. They also gave me some helpful information about things like mother and toddler groups, and child care generally.*

All SUs greatly appreciated the Family Day which the FSWs arranged at the end of the programmes and which they universally found relaxing and 'normalising' for themselves, their children and families. In several cases also, broken family relationships had been re-established as a result of the FSWs' ongoing work.

**Leeds FM prisoner SU:** *She put me in touch with a counsellor who helped me talk about my bad childhood and also talk about it with my partner.*

All the FM/FI supporters appreciated the opportunity to be included in the programmes, to participate in drawing up the 'Family Action Plan', and to be afforded an insight into the prisoner's learning. The extremely positive response of FM supporters has been comprehensively chronicled elsewhere (Boswell & Poland 2007; Price, 2009) and need not be restated in detail here, other than in relation to the individual contact with the FSW, which included the resolution of several debt or housing crises, also affecting children. There were mixed responses when other SUs were asked if they had heard of the FI/FM programmes. Some prisoner SUs had, and had applied to go on the next programme while others had and did not think it was for them, with a further small number not having heard of these programmes and wondering if better publicity might be developed for the future. When those who had been involved in the programmes were asked if they thought other prison programmes should offer contact with a FSW, there was universal assent, an affirmation for Safe Ground's and Pact's notions of extending the FSW model in line with the Family Learning aspirations of Pathway 6.

**Bristol FM prisoner SU:** *Yes, because everything you do has a meaning for your family. But when people come into prison, a FSW should always be available to them and their families, whether they do programmes or not.*

**Wandsworth partner:** *Yes, I think it's a really good idea for partners to be able to do a course together, and that the children can get some benefit from it too.*

Although this kind of extension had been envisaged for the Leeds pilot in particular, the FSW's existing workload had not allowed for developing the role beyond the

Fathers Inside programme, which it did successfully for the first time during the pilot period. The other Family Learning programmes were of between one and two weeks in length, making it difficult to include time to deploy the Family Action Plan in a meaningful way. In respect of the FSW's work on the FM/FI programmes stimulating learning for children, several prisoner and visiting SUs spoke of the helpfulness of a homework club run by one prison; of the pleasure (and sometimes learning) afforded children by story tapes/CDs recorded for them by their fathers; of the activities and games provided on Family Days; and one man in particular spoke of his pride that his son had developed the confidence to seek a role in his school play as a direct result of seeing his father act in the Family Man presentation:

*Belmarsh FM prisoner SU: My son learned things from me being involved in FM. He thought the Selfish Giant was just great and, because he saw me acting in the presentation in December, he actually got a role in his Christmas school play. It really had a positive effect on him*

#### **6.10 Perceptions of the FSW role and what could be done to improve the service:**

FSWs were praised by SUs for their helpfulness, swiftness, and professionalism in supporting prisoners and their relatives/friends, both individually and in conjunction. They were also particularly valued for their personal qualities such as a cheerful disposition and their unwavering respectful attitude towards both prisoners and their relatives/friends. These qualities contrasted profoundly, in the SUs' view, with the dismissive and sometimes discourteous attitude of some prison officers (Wandsworth came in for particular criticism from almost all visiting SUs here) whom some SUs would not even consider approaching because of previous bad experiences.

*Wandsworth partner: I have to say that I found the officers very unapproachable. They actually treat you like prisoners, not relatives of prisoners. When you go for a visit, they herd you around, just like animals. They also have to search you before you go across to the visits room and it's a walk between the two places. Once they've searched you, it means you can't put anything on your head, so if it's raining, you get soaked walking between the two places. On one recent visit, because it was raining, one visitor put her hood up and one of the officers shouted at her 'Get your hood down'. It was really dreadful – she was so embarrassed. He was just so rude. If it would be possible for you to pass on some of my concerns in this research, I'd be so grateful – but please make sure I remain anonymous.*

It would be unfair, of course, to label all prison officers negatively. A small number of prisoner SUs in particular recounted positive experiences of being helped by them, for example when they were experiencing health problems, and Bristol was generally reported as being a family-friendly prison (perhaps because it was also the smallest) – but the overall view of the SUs in this study was that the FSW's played a crucial and unique role by being in the prison but not of it. Although their existing work was overwhelmingly appreciated, when invited to make suggestions for improvement or development, SUs put forward a number of constructive ideas which may be broadly grouped as follows

- Build in individual sessions with the FSW on the FM and FI programmes.
- Make sure the Visitors' Centres are always open and a FSW available when visitors are expected.
- Increase the publicity about the FSW service: convey information to prisoners and families at the earliest possible moment; be clear about direct points of contact for both prisoners and families; broadcast the service on prison radio channels; find a way to ensure posters remain on wing notice boards; make sure 'Listeners' and 'Insiders' know about the service and are given information leaflets to circulate; talk to prisoners at association times.
- If prison managers made sure staff did their jobs properly, then FSWs would not have to waste their time putting right other people's mistakes and could spend more time on longer-term support for prisoner and their families
- Every prison in the country should have not just one FSW, but one on every wing, as there is such a need for someone who can communicate between prisoners and their families. The following quotation emphasises this point:

*Belmarsh Grandmother: We are in 2010 now and I would think by now there should be something like this in all prisons. They should fund it, because if people can be helped like this, I think it could actually help to prevent some youngsters from re-offending. Also, if you are on your own, or with a young family, and your husband has gone to prison, it can be very lonely. If you have no-one to turn to, the FSWs are there to help you. They should be in every prison.*

### **6.11 Implications of the views and experiences of FSW users and non-users:**

The quantitative and qualitative material presented in this section has demonstrated both that SUs have experienced a reduction in the level of their problems as a result of the FSWs' intervention, and that the quality and tenor of the FSWs' communication with them is profoundly appreciated. The FSWs are seen as being quickly responsive, informative, efficient and, perhaps most importantly respectful and non-judgmental. It is very important to both prisoner and visiting SUs that they are independent of the prison system, and do not wear uniforms. It is also apparent that the FSWs are seen as being able to resolve problems great and small, practical or emotional, at times in the course of one contact, at others in the course of many contacts over a long period of time. However, there is clearly a resource issue here, especially given SUs' recommendations for improvement and development of the role at 6.11 above, and it may be that some choices will need to be made for the future about the desirability of continuing with the troubleshooting role as opposed to the ongoing casework role.

It would be impossible to do justice in this report to the full range of the FSWs' work (including that of the several social work students and volunteers who have also played a part) described to the Research Team in 90 in-depth interviews over the study period. In order to provide a more comprehensive flavour of the kind of service they provided, four short case studies, one from each prison, are included at **Appendix F**.

## 7. Views and Experiences of FSWs and relevant staff

**7.1 Key staff and other professionals:** This section recounts the views and experiences of prison staff and other professionals who have knowledge of the FSWs and their work, and sets out the reflections of the FSWs themselves on the role they have piloted. Beginning with the former, 21 key staff members at all four prisons were interviewed or, in two cases, responded to a parallel questionnaire, about the impact of the FSW role on their work and on the wider prison regime. Their locations will not be identified so that confidentiality and anonymity are preserved. The staff respondents comprised: the four Governing Governors; one functional Governor (Head of Learning, Skills and Employability); one Principal Officer for Visits; one Prison Officer for Families and Children (also FM Tutor); one Learning and Skills Co-ordinator; one Family Learning Co-ordinator (also Tutor on Safe Ground programmes); one Family Learning Tutor (also Tutor on Safe Ground programmes); four Family Man Tutors; one NVQ Assessor; one Healthcare Promotion Manager; one Healthcare Administrator; one Samaritans Trainer; one head of a 'through-the-gate' Integrated Offender Management Unit; and two Senior Probation Officers (Offender Management Unit).

**7.2 Staff ratings of the FSW role:** Tables 13 and 14 below respectively show these 21 staff members' ratings of how well the FSW post was working in their prison, and how well it was enabling children and families to maintain contact with their imprisoned relative. Here, a scale of 1-10 was employed (where 1 = very poorly and 10 = very well; N/A = not answered). A selection of illustrative comments across the four prisons, from the 16 staff working directly with FSWs, including suggestions for the development and improvement of the role appears below each table. (The four Governing Governors' comments appear separately at 7.3)

**Table 13: Staff members' ratings of how well the FSW post was working in their prison (n = 21)**

<i>Very poorly... .. Very well</i>											
<b>Rating scale</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Staff ratings</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10	3	3	2

It can be seen from the above Table that all staff scored the way in which the post was working in their prison in the top half of the rating scale, with a cluster of scores at 8. The majority considered that the post should be extended to all prisons. A minority related their score to the way in which their particular FSW was working, given that the post itself was, quite reasonably, seen as still being in its development stages and in need of evidence as to its effectiveness.

**Principal Officer for Visits:** It gives us the ability to manage families. Families will talk to the FSW and not to a 'white-shirt' prison officer. The FSW talks to families on a friendly basis and they can have a different relationship that allows all of us to access important information....I think perhaps some prison officers might regard the FSW role as rather an 'unseen' and menial role, but it takes the pressure off prison officers. The FSW facilitates access to families, and it works really well because of the people and the organization it's connected with. As prison staff, we feel we are working with people who have a good organizational reputation. I think this resource has been used very well. If it was withdrawn, how would we replace it?

**Head of 'through-the-gate' Integrated Offender Management Unit:** Greater links are being forged between custody and community on a daily basis.

**Senior Probation Officer (Offender Management Unit):** It would seem to have a valid contribution to make to enable families and prisoners to keep those ties especially in a local prison where families can be linked into local services. I think their services could be better advertised/increase staff awareness of it in the OMU if they want staff to use the service effectively.

**Family Learning Tutor:** (In respect of the revised Safe Ground programmes) The FSW's existence has made our job a lot easier....She has had direct contact with the Supporters and gained information about them through working with the men , plus arranging their visits, organizing the 'What Next' session and the Family Day visits (at the end of the programmes). However, I think that there have been staffing problems in her organisation, which meant that she couldn't fully commit to working on these programmes and her other work prioritised accordingly while these courses were running.

**FM Tutor (1):** The FSW role is brilliant, both in FM and otherwise. This is something that needs to grow in the prison and people need to be aware that it is helpful - particularly the staff need to know this. We also have an Induction process within the Education Department and there could be an opportunity for the FSW to infiltrate there too. Talking to prisoners is important, as well as giving them written information about the role of the FSW. I've referred 3 or four men to the FSW now, and it has been brilliant - there are no problems about it from my point of view.

**Healthcare Administrator:** From my perspective, it would appear to be working hugely well. I have a lot of faith in the FSW and when we exchange information about anything or anybody in here, I'm 100% confident that the situation will be dealt with very quickly and efficiently by her. She is a very dedicated individual and she always pays great attention to detail.

**FM Tutor (2):** So far as FM is concerned, it's brilliant, and I imagine that it works well generally too. It's a fantastic idea to expand the FSW's role, and I cannot see how it would not work.

These comments suggest a high level of appreciation of the FSW role and work, and its positive impact upon a wide range of staff members' areas of purview as well as the wider prison and community domains. The advantage of the FSW not being a prison

officer was again emphasised, as well as the relief afforded to some staff workloads by the FSW's role with families. However, the management of limited FSW resources was clearly an issue in some cases, and the need for more publicity about the FSW service was also a pointer for development. This latter was important for prison staff as well as for potential service users. For example, links between the FSW service and the Offender Management Units (OMUs) in each prison clearly needed to be forged if strategic progress was to be made along the seven pathways to reducing reoffending. Although these links had begun at some of the prisons, it was clear that there was work to be done on both sides in improving mutual understandings of each others' roles and, given the highly competing calls on the FSWs' time, this was perhaps a strategic task, best undertaken by FSW and OMU managers.

**Table 14: Staff members' ratings of how well the FSW post was enabling children and families to maintain contact with their imprisoned relative (n = 21)**

<i>Very poorly... ..Very well</i>											
<b>Rating scale</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Staff ratings</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	10	2	4

Table 14 above shows that all staff scored the quality with which the FSW post was enabling contact between prisoners, their children and families in the top half of the rating scale, with a cluster of scores at 9.

**Functional Governor (Head of Learning, Skills and Employability):** *The prison wall is a big thing, which is why involving families in resettlement hasn't really been done before. What works so well with the post here is the very good partnership between the prison officer responsible for families and children, with his inbuilt adherence to security systems within groups of visitors, and the FSWs who can open up the closed community of the prison to the outside community to the benefit of both those communities.*

**Prison Officer for Families & Children (also FM Tutor):** *Feedback I get from service users reinforces the fact that the FSWs help them to maintain this contact. The FSWs drive this work, but it's important that we do it together. I work with prisoners to support their families, and the FSWs support the families directly.*

**Learning & Skills Coordinator:** *If it wasn't for this FSW post there would be nothing for children and families of prisoners. Children's Centres are not really accessed by those who need it, such as children of prisoners. Children's Services are not really engaged in attending meetings about this. Probation in this city is useless – it's not there.*

**Family Learning Coordinator:** *I don't think this can be improved upon really, as the FSW facilitates contact between the prisoners and their families very well.*

**NVQ Assessor (for prisoners working in advisory or peer support roles as, for example, on the Safe Ground programmes):** It's about getting the word out, increasing the awareness amongst staff and prisoners, about what is available to prisoners. It's also about building up partnerships and links with other organisations, and gaining access to them. The FSW links with our housing resource people in the prison, and prisoners, to increase awareness of her role, so that people know what is available from her and her organisation. You can feel quite lost when you come into prison, and relationships with families and children is probably the No.1 thing that prisoners get most stressed about. Essentially, the FSW is a link between the prisoner and his family.

**Healthcare Promotion Manager:** From what the FSW has said, and from what I have seen her doing, she appears to be the main link between the prisoner and his family, ensuring that that link is maintained, and perhaps enhanced by the crisis they find themselves in, or, perhaps the link has deteriorated as a result of him being in prison. I think it's also about supporting relatives at what can be a very difficult time for them.

**Samaritans Trainer:** As a recent example, I came across a prisoner who was not able to see his children because he is estranged from his partner, with whom the children live. However, the prisoner has an older son who was prepared to bring the children to see their father but permission was needed from the estranged wife – the children's mother - for this older son to take the children to the prison to see their father. An added complication was that the prisoner was not allowed to have his estranged wife's address so he was not able to send the requisite VO to his wife to enable the children to visit. Anyway, the FSW became involved and sorted the whole thing out, and now the children visit their father quite regularly. I have also referred to the FSW a couple of families who were experiencing difficulties in financing visits to their partners. They were actually attending the FM Presentation/Family Day when I came across them and they mentioned their concerns to me. So, I think that the FSW role benefits both prisoners and their families.

Again, a wide range of staff familiar with the FSWs' work gave very positive endorsements of their role in helping to maintain family ties, with one telling example given in the Samaritan Trainer's quotation above. Some stressed the importance of this work being properly supported by the prison system itself. Others noted the importance of the links with other agencies and individuals, both internal and external, which FSWs can make to support children and families and aid prisoner resettlement. Again, it is clear that more FSW time is needed to develop these links further, so that organisations such as Children's Services and Probation Areas, as in the example cited by the Learning and Skills Co-ordinator above, can play their proper role in the implementation of Pathway 6.

**7.3 The Governing Governors:** Individual prison Governors are generally agreed to have a great deal of power to determine what goes on in a prison and so this section deals separately with their views about the FSWs and their work. All four Governors tended to rely on their senior staff to feed back information about the FSW role. *They were not all aware of the way in which it had evolved in their prisons, or of its specific work in bringing the 'outside' and inside' worlds together.* They did not all feel sufficiently familiar with the role to rate its quality and contribution to family ties in their own prison. However, some had been to the Family Man presentation and 'What Next' days (organized by the FSWs) and had been impressed with what they had seen. Nonetheless, as top managers with ultimate accountability, they were all necessarily concerned that the accompanying prison resources needed to support the FSW role should be justified by evidence (including the findings from the present evaluation).

*Gov 1: I have Functional Heads and Senior Managers to oversee these areas on my behalf. I do, however, talk to PACT reasonably regularly about provision in general, whether I have any concerns, or not, or about the contract – this includes the Director. I have seen their facilities and they are currently being refurbished. I am aware of the support they provide in the prison.*

*Gov.2: I've been and watched the interaction on Family Man. It's good to see the sense of pride of the families when they come in to see what the prisoner has been doing, as well as the chance for them to network with agencies and with each other on the 'What Next' days. For me, it's crucial, and the more we can do the better – even though we have to put extra resources in, such as security, to be able to bring the families in on those days. We've been successful at getting staff to understand what decency is, and what is involved in reducing reoffending – getting them to think how they'd feel if their own children were coming in to prison to visit them. The FSW post has been a great success here and we are blessed with the people who run it. But you can't run the post in isolation. The prison has to support it through the Line Management system, investing resources strategically and networking with other interested parties.*

*Gov. 3: It's when a prisoner is released back to his family that reality kicks in and that's when they all need the support. I'd prefer to see a more practical and holistic approach based on what we know actually works, and that means much more joined up activity between the prison and the outside world, so that the prisoner can make the transition between the two more easily than is possible at present. That's not to disregard Family Man, but I don't feel that it should be a 'stand alone' activity undertaken at any time during a man's sentence.*

*Gov. 4: The FSW is another bolt in the armory and provides a means of breaking down barriers and a different way of working..... But we have to save money so we have to consider when we introduce anything new whether it is working and whether we carry on with it. We have to look at things which cause the least impact on our resources. It's all about checks and balances. There are risks attached to things that we like to try out, but it doesn't mean to say that you should stop doing them because of that. Sometimes, though, people have to put pressure on me to make it happen!*

As **Gov. 2** implies, the FSW post itself is not the only resource investment that has to be considered by these top managers. As at least two other staff pointed out in **7.2** above, to operate effectively, the post must run in partnership with other key personnel and the management system must support it; to justify this, its value needs to be verified.

**7.4 The FSW respondents:** All 8 FSWs (one of whom was also a Masters social work student), their two managers and a second social work student undertaking a practice placement in this role were interviewed about their views and experiences of the role, including training and development needs. Two worked full-time in the role and the others worked part-time, each prison having a full-time equivalent post. Three part-time FSWs only operated for part of the study period. The two managers and the 5 FSWs who have remained in post throughout the evaluation period were interviewed twice (or, in two cases, answered questionnaires on the second occasion), once in the early stages and again towards the end of the study period, to see if their experiences and perceptions of the role had changed over time. They had all also had an opportunity to see and comment on the Interim Report prepared in March 2009. Subsection **1.4** above has set out the basic characteristics of the day-to-day FSW role within each of the four prisons; the next 4 subsections describe the way in which the role in each prison has developed over time, as explained by the FSWs and their managers.

**7.5 Belmarsh developments:** The FSW post was originally shared between two workers for two and three days a week each, but workload difficulties meant that, from May 2010, the former had to revert to her role as Pact Support Worker in the Visitors' Centre. At this point, the latter increased her days from 3 to four and the Visitors' Centre Manager, who had previously carried out some FSW work, took over one FSW pilot day per week. The FSW working for four days was wholly responsible for the FSW work on the Family Man programme which, being 'rolling' at Belmarsh, is much more demanding of FSW time than at the other prisons. (Four FM programmes ran during the course of the Belmarsh pilot). However, Belmarsh did have the advantage during the pilot period of being able to deploy four social work students on placement and a small number of Visitors' Centre volunteers, on aspects of the FSW task, though they had to be trained and supervised by the two FSWs. Having this number of 'bodies' has probably contributed to the average session length of 29 minutes with service users (see also **4.3**). Referrals to the FSW have continued to come from the Visitors' Centre, Pact's court-based service, 'Family Man', prison staff, by telephone, and through a wing-based 'locked box' request system, but have now also extended to the 2-day prisoner Induction programme, where the FSWs and Pact have their own page on a powerpoint presentation. The FSW is currently working with Safer Custody to replace the 'locked box' request process with a new prisoner application form, which will be put on the internal computer system and forwarded to the FSWs to deal with any family issues. She has also encouraged prison staff from the Safer Custody team to start coming into the Visitors' Centre to make themselves known to families, to encourage

communication about prisoner concerns. While the family support role itself has not changed over time, it has been widely publicised by the FSWs both internally and externally, with new agencies being recruited to the FM 'What Next' session, and plans for these sessions to be extended to non-FM prisoners.

**7.6 Bristol developments:** The system where the Visitors' Centre Manager occupies 3 days per week of the pilot FSW post, with an Assistant FSW (also a Masters social work student) who occupies it for two days per week has persisted throughout the pilot period. As referred to at 1.4 they have also during this period provided a 2-hour Family Information Session once a month (staffed also by a Prison and an Education Officer) which also affords an extra prisoner visit, and have taken some of their referrals from this session. However, with the recent advent of the P-NOMIS system, which replaced the LIDS system, the computer could not cope with the extra visits being offered, which meant that the take-up fell to such small proportions that staff time on the sessions could no longer be justified. This was unfortunate, given that many SUs found this session most helpful, as well as appreciating the opportunity to meet and share experiences with others in the same situation as themselves. As a consequence, the FSWs are looking at other ways to channel information to potential SUs at the earliest stage possible. In this, they are at a disadvantage compared with the other three prisons, in that visitors do not have to pass through the Visitors' Centre in order to get through to their Visits. However, the Governing Governor is aware of this difficulty and currently looking at ways to address it. They continue to receive referrals from prisoner induction, telephone calls, the Visitors' Centre, 'Family Man' (on which they also offer a FSW service) and from the Offender Management Unit's 'layered' referral system, as described at 1.4. This system is in its early stages and will take time to work effectively, but is a further example of the importance of bringing FSW and OMU services closer together. The FSWs have also proactively used the evaluation 'Star' charts as a practice tool to encourage their SUs to open up, which they appear more inclined to do when told it is for research purposes. They have also been able to check on community-based SUs' progress in this way, by ringing them up and asking them to complete the second 'after FSW' Star chart. Covering all aspects of their SUs' life in this way enables them to develop a more holistic picture, which they feel better equips them to meet those SUs' needs.

**7.7 Wandsworth developments:** A single full-time worker has been the only FSW serving the largest prison in the country throughout the pilot period. Referrals continue to come from the Visitors' Centre, the Pact team, the 'First Night' service, the 'Family Man' programme (on which she also provides the FSW service) a range of prison staff, and by telephone. Because she has been the only person in the role, it has not been possible to divide up her duties in the way that other prisons have, to an extent, been able to do. Thus, when she is working on the FM programme, there is little opportunity to undertake other FSW work. She has chosen to concentrate on Pact's preferred model of providing a particularly proactive casework service to prisoners and their families, but to fewer numbers than her counterparts, thus averaging 49 minutes per case across

the study period. A further area of considerable focus has been the setting up of meetings publicizing the FSW role, to encourage a wide range of internal staff, such as Education, Healthcare and OMU as well as wing staff, to make referrals to her. As a consequence, she and her role have become well-known across the prison, and initial referrals tend to come more from prisoners than families (who are then contacted), rather than the other way round, as in earlier days. However, the increased number of referrals which have resulted mean that there is now effectively a waiting list for her services.

**7.8 Leeds developments:** As noted at 1.4, the job description was slightly different from that of the other FSWs in that it was supported by the DCSF's 'Supporting Families through the Recession' funding stream, with a brief to focus mainly upon prisoner SUs to develop Family Learning opportunities. A single FSW was appointed in mid-August 2009, and she continued in this pilot role until the funding ceased at the end of March 2010. However, this left a void in the direct work with families for which there remained a considerable demand, and it subsequently became necessary for another Jigsaw Centre worker to take over this part of the FSW role, with occasional overlap between the two. Referrals continued to come via Resettlement Assessment forms, Prison Listeners, wing staff, and the 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' programmes, to which she was attached. As the pilot developed, however, the FSW became closely involved in the prison's 'First Night' Centre, where she interviewed all incoming prisoners and offered assistance with any family-related issues. She also worked hard to publicise the FSW service on the prison wings, with OMU, the Probation Service, Resettlement, and outside agencies, whom she also recruited to the Safe Ground programmes' 'What Next' days. In terms of the brief to develop Family Learning opportunities, while the FSW's increasing casework and liaison role on the 'Family Man' and 'Fathers Inside' programmes (the latter including 'Supporters' for the first time) was much valued by prisoners and staff, there was some disappointment on the part of the Family Learning staff that her presence on the programmes had not been greater, given that set times and activities had been prescribed for this. Her manager considered that this was because there were times on these programmes when she was not needed or used and so was better employed helping other prisoners at those times, added to which there was a numerical target of SUs to meet. This was, perhaps, a situation where better managerial liaison was required. Nonetheless, while in practice other Family Learning programmes had been either too short, too delayed or containing insufficient numbers for meaningful FSW involvement, the principle of extending the 'Supporter' model of family/friend involvement to an existing programme ('Fathers Inside') was successfully established at Leeds.

**7.9 Common FSW practices:** While the above four subsections highlight the nuanced differences in FSW practice across the four prisons, largely relating to funding focus and individual prison systems and routines, it is clear that all work hard both to publicise their services and to meet the needs of as many prisoners and families as their

working hours will allow. Aspects of development in their work which most had become involved in to a greater or lesser degree, included the following: working with Safer Custody in the interests of protecting prisoners **at risk of self-harm or suicide**; working with prison-based Healthcare; working with OMUs (with varying degrees of success, but with the aim of promoting the Children and Families Pathway and establishing both Unit and individual Offender Manager/Probation Officer presence at 'What Next' sessions); working with Children's Services; helping FM prisoner students with structured letter-writing to their Supporters (also extended to FI, though conducted by the programme Tutors) who, as previous research has shown, greatly value this (Boswell & Poland, 2007; Price, 2009); liaising with Supporters and organising Family Days. There were many examples from session and 'Star' sheets as to how such liaison ultimately helped SUs. These included: the identification through FSW/Family/Safer Custody communication of a potentially suicidal prisoner; through FSW/Family/Healthcare the identification of a prisoner who had been without medication for an ongoing condition for 3 weeks; and through Families and Children Prison Officer/FSW/Family/Children's Services, the threat to an ex-partner and her children from a prisoner when he was due to be released. One FSW reported that, even though the quality of referrals from OMU left something to be desired, there was always good mutual co-operation with them and with Safer Custody when it came to addressing risk in specific cases:

*FSW 1: I have had to speak to OMU regarding several child protection cases and they are always helpful when approached. We have a good working relationship with Safer Custody and I often give out their number to families who are concerned about loved ones, and they refer families to us.*

Thus, it was clear that the presence of FSWs fulfilled much more than a 'welfare' role in these prisons; their good liaison work also contributed significantly to the health and safety of prisoners and their families.

**7.10 FSW training and development:** In terms of initial qualifications for this role, Pact and Jigsaw needed to appoint people to the FSW posts quickly, in order to have them in place by the start of the respective funding periods. As a consequence, they made the decision in most cases to appoint existing employees, who already had experience of working in prisons and with prisoners and families, who could in effect 'hit the ground running'. In these circumstances, the FSWs have all done a commendable job and, as reported in these pages, all are highly rated by service users, colleagues, and other prison staff. However, the pilot process has highlighted the need for some basic qualifying requirements in the longer term. All the FSWs have, at times, found themselves dealing with quite complex emotional situations which, in some cases, have left them feeling out of their depth. Those with a counselling qualification felt equipped to deal with these cases as, interestingly, did the social work students who were interviewed, since they were acquiring the necessary skills on their courses. Sometimes,

the FSWs would acknowledge that the students knew more about certain aspects of the role than they did! Those with teaching or mental health qualifications could also offer particular strengths to the role, but the need for a counselling qualification, or a social work qualification, which would equip FSWs with the majority of skills they need to conduct effective casework, did appear to stand out. One of the FSWs commented:

*FSW 2: I feel, at times, that I am acting like a counsellor and I don't claim to be one. I think it would be good if I could be offered some training in that area..... I do feel that I've been put in situations that I really should not have been put in, and there's really no-one to talk with about that. I'm having to learn very much by trial and error and hope that what I'm doing is appropriate. There are times when I don't feel on very safe ground – for example, when I'm dealing with a sex offender from the Vulnerable Prisoners Unit, I just feel that I would like some training on how to work with vulnerable prisoners, such as what it is and isn't appropriate to do with them. I do worry that if anything goes pear-shaped as a result of any advice or help I give based on my own rather limited knowledge, and mostly based on my own common sense, who is going to support and stand by me?*

This dilemma raises the two further issues of FSW supervision and organisational staff training and development. Pact managers established an FSW peer support group which met regularly throughout the pilot project to share learning, ideas and offer mutual support. However, none of the FSWs received individual casework supervision from their line managers, who were mainly preoccupied with generating funding to sustain the pilot posts, and this would clearly need to be put in place for the future, particularly given the need for regular, high quality practitioner supervision identified by countless public inquiries and reviews of child and adult fatalities - for example the long-term abuse and eventual murders in their families of Jasmine Beckford (Blom-Cooper, 1985) and Victoria Climbié (Laming, 2003), where professionals were accused of neglecting their duty of intervention; the Soham murders, where the failure of professionals to communicate and liaise effectively about a known sex offender was highlighted (Bichard, 2004); and the murders of two French students by Dano Sonnex, who had been released from police custody through administrative error (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2009). This, like many other implications of the pilot, is a resource matter – but it is also a public safety issue.

Post-appointment staff training and development opportunities were nonetheless considerable (more so for the Pact FSWs) and included key pieces of training such as: 12-week teacher training (first part of a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education) for Pact FSWs; FM/FI training by Safe Ground; Brief Intervention and Assessment training; Prison Service training in Diversity, P-NOMIS, ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork), Health & Safety; local authority and organisational Safeguarding Children training; local authority training on mental health; 'Hidden Sentence' training for all Pact workers (devised by 'Families do Matter', delivered by 'Action for Prisoners' Families' to local authorities and prison workers, incorporating the Every Child Matters Common Assessment Framework [see DCSF, 2010] and promoting a 'joined up'

approach); and welfare benefits/debt advice training by organisations such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau. However, for the future, these training opportunities would need to be less piecemeal and the employing organisations would need to identify what were the essential ingredients for pre-qualifying training and what for post-qualifying training, development and supervision, so that FSWs were not left feeling vulnerable in the way described above. Additionally, some training in simple monitoring and evaluation methods would be invaluable, since it is crucial for employing organisations to gain a measure of the FSWs' effectiveness, and some FSWs acknowledged that they had struggled to work within such methods for this evaluation. (Since the commencement of the pilot, New Philanthropy Capital has begun working with a number of charities, including Pact and Safe Ground to help them establish effective ways to measure their impact on family ties. Jigsaw could also benefit from this kind of help). The final point to make about training is that most FSWs commented on how helpful it was to meet together for training sessions, and would like more opportunities to do this, because they learned a great deal from hearing about each others' experiences and practices.

### **7.11 FSWs' reflections on the pilot project and their recommendations for the future:**

All the FSW interviews, both at the beginning and the end of the project reflected the high levels of commitment to and, indeed, enjoyment of their roles by these personnel, as highlighted in the following quotations:

*FSW 3: I have absolutely loved it! (1<sup>st</sup> interview). I still absolutely love it! (2<sup>nd</sup> interview).*

*FSW 4: Prior to doing this job, someone would raise an issue such as 'How do I tell my child about imprisonment – what do I say?' and you'd have to try and deal with that in five minutes in an office. The value of this job is that I can seek out further advice and guidance for people, plus places to refer people to regarding specific issues that I can't deal with - e.g., to health districts and children's centres.*

*FSW 5: To be very honest with you, at first I didn't want to do this job. I loved my former job (in the same setting) and this one took me out of my comfort zone. But since being involved in FM, I found that I thoroughly enjoyed that, and actually seeing a positive change in prisoners and families made me feel that I could be effective in the FSW role.*

*FSW 6: It's been a joy to be able to spend more time with people. I've always felt like a piece of elastoplast in the past – it's given me more time to help my families more. I've been doing family support work for a lot of years now, and I just wish we could get the message over to prison management that helping families keeps prisoners happier and this means the prison runs more smoothly. Governors need to know just how much work we do for them. We foster good relationships with people to get things done.*

They had some particularly useful recommendations to make for the future of the FSW role, which may be broadly grouped as follows:

- It is crucial that the FSW role remains independent of the prison system; prisoners and families find it much easier to trust them because of this.
- The FSW role is needed in all prisons, but the piloting process should first be extended to different types of prisons – e.g. open prisons, women’s prisons, training prisons, young adult YOIs, sex offenders’ prisons (2 FSWs expressed concern that their lack of training to work with these groups meant that sex offenders’ families, who often had high need for help, received no service). This would help to research the extent to which the FSW role can be standardised and to what extent tailored to the needs of individual prisons
- A tighter, more focused FSW job description should be devised – none of the FSWs thinks it is possible to cover the very long list of tasks currently set out
- NOMS should advise all key prison departments – for example OMUs, Healthcare, Safer Custody, Prison Chaplaincies and the Probation Service - of the FSW role and purpose and the importance of liaising with FSWs
- NOMS should ensure that the FSW role is supported by the prison line management system and that prison staff responsible for Pathway 6 work in co-operation with the FSW
- FSWs need to have a designated space in the prison, and full access to P-NOMIS so that they can more easily obtain and share information about prisoners and families
- A rationalisation of training needs, particularly to include counselling/casework skills
- An agreed strategy for publicising the FSW service, together with suitable publicity materials for prisoners, families, children and supporters
- Systematic monitoring of service users – numbers, types, needs, opinions – so that the FSW service can be tailored to their needs, for example by only bringing in agencies which are likely to be useful to them and, thus, making good use of scarce resources

This is clearly a well thought-out set of suggestions, based on experience, and these ideas are returned to in sub-section 8.10. The last words here should go to 3 FSWs who, between them, emphasised the importance of having such a service in every prison, of it being holistic, independent of the prison system, connected to the community, and of the contribution it could make to reducing offending :

*FSW 1: Since my last interview I have been doing a lot more initial work with prisoners. I think I have changed my approach and ask the men a lot more questions than I used to. In a way I almost work around the STAR chart with the prisoner although in a more informal way. I try to ensure I cover all aspects and probe further to try and break down the barriers around disclosing sensitive information. For example, if there are children I have started to ask if there are other agencies involved in offering support and if they would like me to contact them. I try to pick up referrals for the debt advice agency whom we work closely with by asking both the men and families when I contact them if there are any debts. This change has been forced in part through*

*the prison changing its induction procedure. I don't see it as a negative thing though as there is nothing more reassuring for worried families than being able to speak to somebody who has had face to face contact with the person they are worried about. There are times when I have spent quite a lot of time speaking to prisoners about other concerns not family related, or explaining how to do basic things, or who to contact to get things sorted - e.g. relating to housing. This isn't my job but from talking to the men its clear no-one is picking this stuff up and I feel you have to be holistic in this job because family contact has to be set in the wider picture of that inmate's life as family contact alone can't always stop people re-offending.*

*FSW 7: I think outside agencies are often positive when there is a prison connection. They are often aware of the needs but don't have any pathway in. So we can be a bridge for them.*

*FSW 8: I never realised how important it was until I started doing this job, and saw the amount of people who are 'lost' in prison, and have no information about things. They go to a prison officer and are told to go away – and then they wonder why prisoners commit crimes! If prisoners could have more support and help 'inside' and be signposted to helpful, supportive things 'outside', I think there'd be less crime committed.*

**7.12 Staff & FSW respondents in summary:** Key staff with knowledge of FSWs and their work, rated their role and contribution to maintaining prisoner and family ties very highly. Some also felt the role relieved the pressure on their own workloads. Nonetheless, work remained to be done in increasing mutual understandings, perhaps needing to involve line managers. The four Governing Governors were less directly familiar with the FSWs and their work than were the other staff respondents, but were broadly supportive of the role, provided it linked clearly to resettlement and afforded evidence of effectiveness. The FSWs themselves had much enjoyed and were highly committed to their work, believing it effected change, and advocating its extension to other prisons. Workloads and training were particular issues needing further attention, and FSWs had several other constructive suggestions for their role development following the pilot. It was clear from their comments that all the FSWs are taking the opportunity not only to work holistically across prisoner and family, but also to make firm links with relevant agencies and departments, promoting a 'Think Family' ethos both within and beyond the prison (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008), and employing the learning from training, such as that for mental health and the Common Assessment Framework, to act and to make appropriate referrals in respect of important issues such as child safeguarding, and generally both to sustain and extend the scope of their work to service users.

## 8. Beyond the FSW pilot

**8.1** This evaluation report has presented the quantitative data about the characteristics, of 928 SUs returned by the FSWs to the Research Team over respective periods of 6½ months (Leeds) and 9 months (Belmarsh, Bristol and Wandsworth). It has also extracted relevant data from a total of 128 qualitative interviews with 90 service users and 38 staff, including 8 FSWs and a social work student on a FSW placement. The following paragraphs summarise the evaluation's salient findings and their implications for a national model of the role of Family Support Worker. Finally, a set of suggested action points is provided at sub-section **8.10**.

**8.2** In Section 4, **Tables 1 - 8** showed that all the FSWs are providing a service to a wide range of Service Users via several channels of referral and communication and that, in half of these cases, the service continues beyond the first contact. Referrals have been made in more than half of cases. Commendably, the recorded number of BME SUs has increased since probable under-recording and possible under-representation were identified in the Interim Report. Practice across the four prisons differs in relation to the prison's own characteristics. The numbers of SUs reached differs for similar reasons, but the fact that the overall number is very much higher than predicted is a credit to the enthusiasm, inventiveness and proactivity of the FSWs at each prison.

***Implication:*** In order to reach as many and as wide a range of SUs as possible, within limited resources, the person specification for the FSW post needs to name the three qualities above, together with flexibility. Awareness of diversity issues is also of the essence; even with the recent possible increase in numbers of BME SUs reached, proactive monitoring in this field is always required (Home Affairs Committee, 2008). The extent of referral to and liaison with agencies and networks which can help SUs further, is proving a real strength of FSW activity. Recent research has indicated a 40% less reoffending rate than the national rate for this kind of 'through-the-gate' support, together with successful resettlement (Frontier Economics, 2010). This is a field in which FSWs can continue to blaze a sustainable trail. The characteristics of the prisons to which FSWs are assigned should be identified, and any available information, service user feedback and evaluation data, drawn upon to identify specific service needs, so that scarce resources can be deployed to best effect.

**8.3** There is a substantial body of research highlighting the often-overlooked needs of prisoners and their families (Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Murray, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2007). Section 5, **Table 9** showed that a large number of SUs have sought and received direct help or referral for a wide range of such needs, but particularly those involving prisoner/family contact, emotional/mental health, children/parenting and managing money. Given the known prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse among offenders, (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2010) it was surprising that these were among the lowest categories of problem taken to the FSWs.

**Implication:** As in 8.2 above, it is important to use the knowledge about highest areas of need to deploy resources and referrals wisely. It is also important to check whether less frequently identified categories of problems are simply being addressed through other channels, or whether SUs, for some reason, do not feel able to bring them to the FSW service. This is also an area which merits FSW proactivity.

**8.4** The quantitative data presented in Section 6, **Tables 10-12**, followed by the qualitative material from SU interviews, demonstrated both that SUs have experienced a reduction in the level of their problems as a result of FSWs' intervention, and that the quality and tenor of the FSWs' communication with them was deeply appreciated. Able to address both practical and emotional problems, the FSWs were seen as being quickly responsive, informative, efficient and, perhaps most importantly in a prison context, non-judgmental and respectful (Butler & Drake, 2007). Non-SUs also considered the availability of the service to be vital. Many respondents emphasized that the FSWs' independence from the prison system enhanced prisoners' and families' ability to trust them.

**Implication:** In order to fully retain their present much-appreciated value base, it **appears** crucial that FSWs remain independent of the prison system. Additionally, although the above paragraph may suggest that they are able to be all things to all people, in reality, the workload capacity of one full-time equivalent post in a prison containing hundreds of inmates is quite limited. Thus, choices will need to be made for the future about the desirability of continuing to carry out 'troubleshooting' tasks which rectify other staff's mistakes or omissions, as opposed to the ongoing casework task, which is how the role was originally envisaged, but which will also require attention to the nature of pre- and post-appointment training and qualifications and the provision of staff supervision.

**8.5** In Section 7, **Tables 13** and **14** alongside qualitative interviews, showed that key staff with knowledge of FSWs and their work, rated their role and contribution to maintaining prisoner and family ties, very highly. FSWs had done a great deal to develop positive working relationships with prison staff and other relevant service providers, but were not always equipped to advance mutual cross-departmental and agency practices at the necessary management level. Resource-minded Governors were broadly supportive but required evidence of effectiveness.

**Implication:** There remains a need for strategic managerial work both within and beyond the prisons, to increase mutual understandings of role and adherence to agreements about working practices. This also entails ensuring that Governing Governors are provided with evidence of ongoing service monitoring and resulting evaluation, including the present document.

**8.6** Qualitative interviews with the FSWs, reported in Section 7 revealed their enjoyment of and high commitment to their work, for which they saw a high level of need not just in their own prisons but across the prison estate. They emphasised the importance of working holistically and some had found the ‘Star’ chart a useful tool for this purpose. They had used the training they had received in spheres such as ‘Think Family’ and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to good effect and made many constructive suggestions for their role development following the pilot, which are incorporated in the summary of suggested action points at **8.10**.

***Implication:*** Their employing organisations should ensure that the conditions which cause the FSWs to so enjoy their work can continue, since enjoyment and job satisfaction are high motivating factors for a vocational workforce (Bronski & Cook, 1994). This importantly entails making decisions about the FSWs’ type of workload focus and how this can be kept manageable. The continued use of the ‘Star’ chart would be an economical way of integrating both a practice and an evaluation tool – though some FSWs find it less easy to use than others and might benefit from further training in its deployment. Since ‘Think Family’ and CAF have been relatively recent pieces of training, their implementation may benefit from further monitoring; [the intended Contact Point \(DCSF database on all children\) training at the start of this pilot did not take place, but it now appears that this system is to be abolished by the Coalition Government.](#)

**8.7** As data from the qualitative SU and staff interviews in Sections 6 and 7 show, the ‘Family Man’ and Fathers Inside’ programmes continue to make a significant impact upon prisoner students, their supporters and their relationships with their children. The FSWs have had differing degrees of involvement in these programmes, which have operated from anything between one and seven times in different prisons during the pilot. All have been involved in arranging the ‘Supporters’ Days, the ‘What Next’ and Family Days, and most in student prisoner selection, induction, facilitating the structured letter-writing between students and their supporters, and the evaluation and presentation at the end. Supporters have been particularly appreciative of the meaningful and sustained relationships they have been able to make with their FSWs through their attendance at these events. During the programmes, some have provided an individual FSW service to students and supporters, while others have tended to play more of a ‘signposting’ role.

***Implication:*** The pilot showed that the successful and popular ‘Supporter’ model could be extended to the ‘Fathers Inside’ programme. There seems no reason why the model could not now be transferred to other programmes, such as drug and alcohol interventions, or even courses like brick-laying. The need is for the prisoner student to be helped to write structured letters about his learning experience, setting out how he intends to apply the skills he has learned (including not just the subject matter, but the process, such as working in a group) both in prison and on release, identifying the challenges and the steps to reaching their goals. FSW support could be pivotal in

promoting this model, which provides the scope for prisoners significantly to develop their opportunities to involve and strengthen links with their children and families.

**8.8** The FSW role at Leeds merits a brief separate mention at this point, since it was differently funded and over a shorter period than the role at the other 3 prisons. The figures reported in Section 4, **Tables 1 - 8**, emphasize the focus required of the Leeds FSW upon prisoner SUs, and the fact that another part-time FSW had to be appointed to undertake some of the direct work with families. In both cases, where continuing communication was needed, the other member(s) of the prisoner/family unit was contacted, as were other agencies as appropriate – for example for CAF purposes. Both FSWs felt that this arrangement had worked well in terms of reaching a wide range of SUs via different routes. The recruiting of prisoner SUs via family learning programmes also worked, but with fewer numbers than originally projected, so that other means of reaching potential SUs had to be, and were found in order to meet revised service targets. As noted at **8.7** above, the piloting of the ‘Supporter’ model on the Fathers Inside programme was a further successful innovation, though FSW involvement had been more limited than envisaged, and there had not been sufficient scope or time within the pilot to spread this model to other programmes.

***Implication:*** Leeds is an example of the way in which the FSW role may benefit from being tailored to the particular needs of the prison and its population. The splitting of direct services to the prisoner and those to the family at first contact appeared to work efficiently and lent itself to flexibility in meeting service targets. This activity also had to be piloted over a relatively short period of time, and would benefit from an extended piloting period to see how this particular model of FSW service and its potential extension to other family learning programmes could be further developed.

**8.9** Although its contribution has not been evaluated as such, it is apparent that agency partnership has played a major role in the development of the FSW post. The role evolved from Safe Ground’s revision of its longstanding ‘Family Man’ programme, in which it successfully piloted the ‘Family Action Plan Co-ordinator’ role and also commissioned the expertise of four related agencies - Pact, One-Plus-One, Relate and Adfam – to enhance the quality of the programme. Since that time, Safe Ground and Pact have worked together to generate a proposal for NOMS funding to develop the present FSW role, in which both agencies now play a significant part and in which they work closely together. A similar process has operated between Safe Ground and Jigsaw, in gaining DCSF funding for the pilot role at Leeds. Safe Ground and Pact also work in partnership with other agencies such as ‘Action for Prisoners’ Families’ and ‘Families Do Matter’ in delivery and receipt of training programmes, and with these and other voluntary sector agencies such as ‘Ormiston Children and Families Trust’, together with the statutory sector in forums such as the Pathway 6 Children and Families Sub-Board of the NOMS Reducing Re-offending Policy Unit.

*Implication:* Effective partnership working between key voluntary sector agencies, and between them and the statutory sector, has played a major part in the development of the FSW service, and its success indicates that they should continue to work in this way.

**8.10 Action points for the future of the FSW role:** The following set of suggested action points is based on the salient findings and implications of this evaluation outlined above, and incorporates the views of the 8 FSWs (set out at 7.11) who have played the most important part in this pilot process.

- ❖ The role of the Family Support Worker has been developed extremely successfully in four pilot settings, and shown to meet a high level of need on the part of prisoners, their children, families, friends and supporters. There is now a strong, evidence-based argument for extending it to all prisons in England and Wales. In the absence of sufficient resources for this in the current stringent economic climate, it would be judicious to extend the existing pilot further to incorporate specific types of prison, such as those for women, young adult YOIs, sex offenders, open and training establishments. This would enable the further testing of the extent to which the FSW role can be standardised across all prisons and the extent to which it needs to be customised according to individual establishment need and practice.
- ❖ Much of the success of the role may be attributed to its development through effective voluntary sector partnerships, notably in this case, Safe Ground, Pact and Jigsaw, and to its clear independence from the prison system. The present findings leave little room for doubt that these successful models should continue and the voluntary sector be resourced to drive their development.
- ❖ The FSW job description, currently long and all-embracing, needs to be tightened to reflect organisational decision-making about the best use of scarce resources and the specific appropriateness of tasks, notably those which focus upon casework rather than ‘troubleshooting’ interventions. This requires preliminary liaison work by and through NOMS, leading to:
  - The identification of a specific prison support system for FSWs, including designated confidential working space and access to relevant information systems, notably P-NOMIS
  - Clear written agreements with Governing Governors and prison sections about who should carry out particular tasks, with specified remedies for those situations where this has not occurred, so that FSWs do not end up as the recipients of others’ mistakes and omissions.
  - Similarly agreed avenues of referral, again with specified remedies for error and omission.

- ❖ The FSW person specification requires to be developed in the following ways:
  - A specified level of pre-qualifying training and qualifications, ideally to include social work, probation or counselling training, *the first two being most likely to equip a beginning FSW with the wide range of skills needed for this work. It should be noted here that the preference of Pact would be for appointees with counselling and brief intervention therapy training, who would then work towards the competency framework they are currently developing with the National Open College Network.*
  - Specified personal qualities to include enthusiasm, commitment, inventiveness, proactivity and flexibility
  - Specified skills to include those of assessment, casework and inter-agency working
  - Specified experience, ideally to include work in family and/or prison settings
  
- ❖ An identified system of post-qualifying training, development and regular staff supervision, which entails access to casework supervision, not only enhancing skills, but also minimising staff vulnerability in risky or unfamiliar situations.
  
- ❖ Manageable workloads to ensure job satisfaction and minimisation of stress in a role which often involves working with high emotion, mental instability and risk. This should include identified referral streams, a notional caseload limit, and a built-in capacity to develop the FSW role in some of the ways suggested in this evaluation as follows:
  - Extending the FM/FI ‘Supporter’ involvement to other prison programmes
  - Developing an agreed strategy for publicising FSW services, ‘telling the good story’ (Feilzer, 2009) both internally and externally, and in a range of languages
  - Exploring the best avenues for attaining contact with ‘hard-to-reach’ potential SUs
  - Ascertaining why some problem categories such as drug and alcohol use, known to be prevalent among prisoners, are not presented to FSWs either by those prisoners or their families with any regularity, with a view to avoiding duplication but extending FSW services and relevant referrals if necessary and appropriate
  
- ❖ The incorporation of a clear monitoring system which lends itself to continuing external evaluation through the identification of SU numbers, types, categories of need, and consumer feedback. Importantly, this should include attention to BME users. To enhance holistic working methods, it could also include the use of the ‘before and after FSW’ Star chart which, in the view of some FSWs, can help to encourage some SUs to open up when told it is ‘for the research’

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, this evaluation has depicted a committed and enthusiastic group of FSWs, working with a wide range of service users, in a wide range of ways which are well-customised to their prisons and local settings. Overall, they offer equal amounts of one-off and continuing contacts with their SUs, providing much-needed information to people unfamiliar with, and often fearful of, the prison environment, as well as an ongoing casework service to those with more persistent problems. SUs interviewed for this evaluation mostly did not know where else they and others would go for such help. Although a small number of SUs and non-SUs found their Probation Officers of help, the era when Probation provided a through-care service incorporating visits to the family home is past. For these interviewees, the presence of a support service such as these FSWs offer was vital in maintaining and strengthening family links and promoting resettlement.

**List of Tables (covering period 15<sup>th</sup> August 2009 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 for Leeds and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010 for all other prisons)**

**Table 1: Number and Type of FSW Service User at First Contact**

**Table 2: Number of single and continuing contacts with SUs**

**Table 3: Number and type of first contacts made with FSW**

**Table 4: Gender breakdown of SUs**

**Table 5: Relationship of SU to prisoner/family member**

**Table 6: Breakdown of self-defined ethnic origin of SUs**

**Table 7: SUs declaring children under the age of 18**

**Table 8: Type of prisoner SU, or prisoner in contact with SU**

**Table 9: FSW session focus areas and referrals**

**Table 10: Difference made by FSW service to SUs, the prisoner's children, or other family members**

**Table 11: Increase to SUs' confidence about maintaining contact between themselves/prisoner/family/children following FSW service**

**Table 12: SU ratings of their satisfaction levels with the FSW service**

**Table 13: Staff members' ratings of how well the FSW post was working in their prison**

**Table 14: Staff members' ratings of how well the FSW post was enabling children and families to maintain contact with their imprisoned relative**

## APPENDIX A: SAFE GROUND'S ACCOUNT OF THE BACKGROUND TO ITS 'FAMILY MAN' AND 'FATHERS INSIDE' PROGRAMMES

Safe Ground is an educational charity, established in 1995. In 1999 it was commissioned by the Prison Service to create two prison-based programmes in family relationships and parenting education, mapped to educational awards. It was the first Arts based organisation to receive a commission of this kind. The programmes were entitled **Family Man** (FM) and **Fathers Inside** (FI). Safe Ground and HM Prison Service own joint copyright of both programmes, which have now been delivered in almost forty establishments and continue to be delivered regularly in twenty five.

Both FM and FI were written to meet the very specific needs of male offenders, many of whom have failed at school and experienced abusive relationships. They aim to teach prisoners new ways of communicating responsibly with staff, support agencies and family members and provide resistant learners with a route into education. Both programmes use fiction to enable offenders to address sensitive subjects and drama is used to enable them to practise behaviours and language to communicate what they have learnt constructively to their peers, prison staff and family members.

FM/FI have been written to be delivered in large groups (16 -20) of students of mixed abilities and delivered by two tutors full time for the required number of weeks (between 4 and 7). Tutors can be allocated from Education or officers from the wing. Throughout the programmes, students are required to complete written work and take part in a range of practical activities which are used to record their learning, and to assess them for up to 3 NOCN Units and Key and Functional Skills.

The difference between the courses is as follows:

***Fathers Inside** is a 4-week practical parenting course that fundamentally aims to help offenders contribute to society by teaching them how to support their child's education and upbringing whilst in custody, looking at ways the men can engage in their child's life and encourage them at school. They consider why children learn, and what the benefits of education are. Through group and teamwork activities they connect their understanding of children with their own need to get the most out of an educational experience. The men are able to recognise that how they behave as a father is likely to have an effect on their children. The course has been developed to give offenders the skills to lead their children away from a life of crime and imprisonment. Its effect upon men and their families has been positively evaluated (Boswell, Wedge & Price, 2005).*

***Family Man** is a 7-week full time family relationships programme, developed in response to an increasing number of prisoners losing contact with their families and being unable to sustain a job or relationships. Its aim is to help prevent institutionalisation and re-offending by providing basic, social and life skills to help offenders understand the benefits of being part of a family and a*

community. It teaches large groups of men the benefits of maintaining family relationships from prison.

*The FM programme has recently been revised, enabling it to directly meet targets presented in the National Reducing Re-Offending Action Plan (Home Office, 2004). FM now requires students to nominate an adult supporter (either a relative, partner, close friend, volunteer or Offender Manager/Supervisor) to whom they write four structured letters, describing their experiences of the programme, identifying what they are learning and how they intend to utilise the skills in order to develop their family relationships and reduce their risk of re-offending. The letters have also been designed to encourage meaningful communication between the student and the supporter following course completion. Supporters are also invited to attend 3 workshops, giving them the opportunity to directly contribute to the progression of the offender post course completion. The first workshop requires the supporters to work independently from the men in the Visitors' Centre, where they are introduced to the FM programme, shown some examples of the men's work, introduced to the SMART model and required to identify achievable goals for the offender to work towards whilst still in prison.*

*The following two workshops take place a week later on the same day. Firstly they involve the student and their supporter working together to compare their Family Action Plans and agree a goal for the student. Secondly, both student and supporter meet a range of representatives from various internal and external resettlement and education agencies that can offer support to both.*

In order for the work with the supporters to be realised, Safe Ground created the new role of Family Support Worker (FSW) for the FM programme during 2006-7. To aid the development of this revised programme model, Safe Ground commissioned the organisations Pact, One-Plus-One, Relate and Adfam to offer their expertise in the development of the FSW role. Following successful trials of the revised programme in HMPs Belmarsh, Bristol, Birmingham, Highpoint, Leeds and Wandsworth (see Boswell & Poland, 2007), Safe Ground and Pact approached NOMS to explore the possibility of taking the role of the FSW further and piloting it on a full time basis. The FSW remit would be to provide support and guidance for supporters and signpost/refer as appropriate, championing a 'Think Family' approach to reducing re-offending. It would also explore the possibility of applying the FSW model to other educational and resettlement-focused interventions. The pilot would be evaluated and lead to recommendations for a national FSW model.

Appendix B: 'Before FSW' Star Chart

Service user (sheet 1)

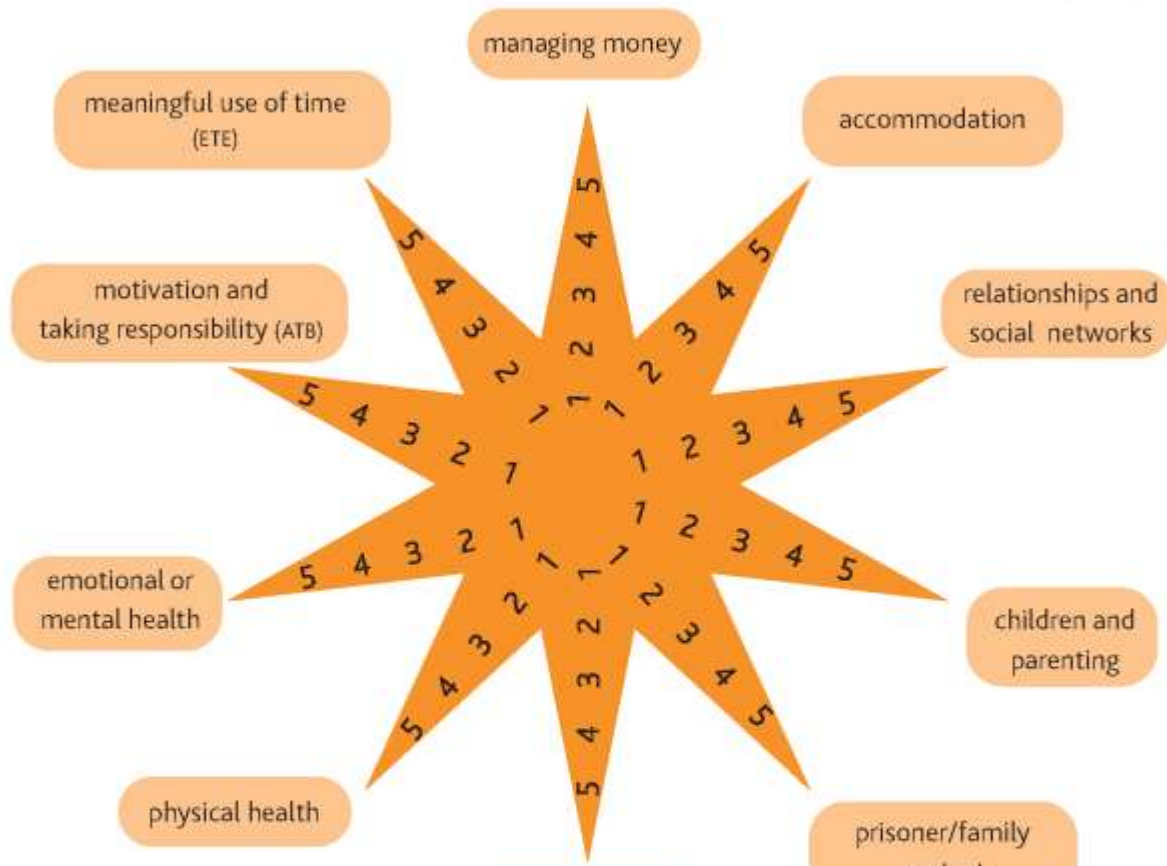
Your name: .....

Family support worker's name: .....

Date: .....

Star guide:

- 1 = no problems
- 2 = very few problems
- 3 = some problems
- 4 = bad problems
- 5 = very bad problems



We would be very grateful if you would be willing to talk to one of our researchers about working with a Family Support Worker so we can find out what works and what we can develop.

Please leave your contact details here. Our researcher, Avril Price, will then be in touch with you to arrange a convenient time for you to speak to her on the telephone. What you say and your contact details will remain confidential to the research team.

Thank you very much for your help.

Your mobile number: .....

Your landline number: .....

Your e-mail address: .....

Your address: .....

.....

.....

A space for any other issues you may have:

Outcomes Star format courtesy of Charities Evaluation Service, London Housing Foundation and Triangle Consulting

Appendix C: 'After FSW' Star Chart

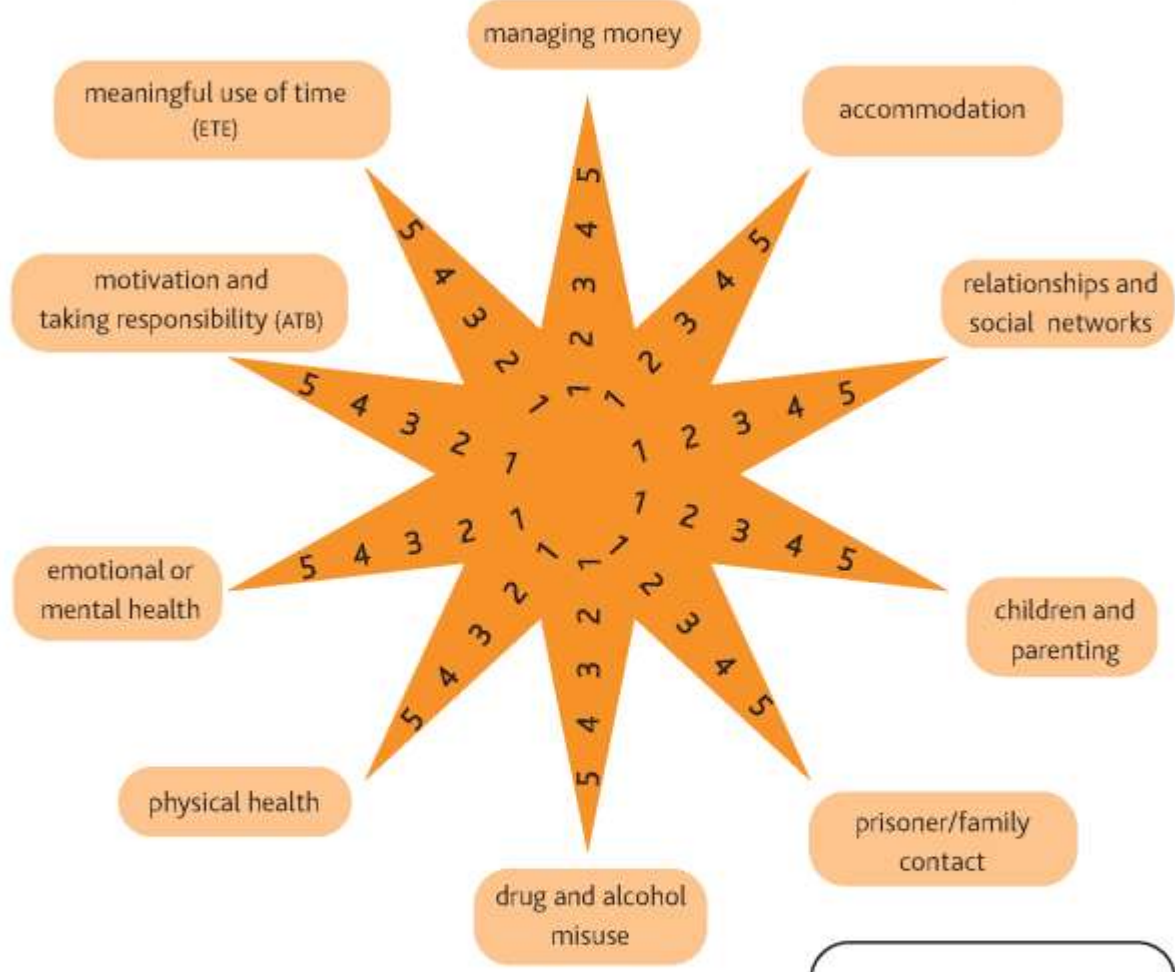
Service user (sheet 2)

Your name: .....

Family support worker's name: .....

Date: .....

**Star guide:**  
 1 = no problems  
 2 = very few problems  
 3 = some problems  
 4 = bad problems  
 5 = very bad problems



How many sessions have you had with the family support worker? .....

How far do you feel the family support worker has helped you with the problems above? **Please circle one:**

- 1. Not at all
- 2. A little
- 3. A fair amount
- 4. A lot
- 5. Solved my problem(s)

A space for any other issues you may have:

Outcomes Star format courtesy of Charities Evaluation Service, London Housing Foundation and Triangle Consulting

**APPENDIX D : Number and Type of Qualitative interviews conducted during Study Period**

<b>NUMBER &amp; TYPE OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED DURING STUDY PERIOD (n=121) **</b>					
<b>INTERVIEW TYPE</b>	<b>LEEDS</b>	<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>BELMARSH</b>	<b>WANDSWORTH</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>Prisoner SUs</b>	4	3	3	3	13
<b>Prisoner SUs who have done FI/FM mid-Sep/ mid-June 09/10</b>	2 FM/3 FI	3FM	3 FM	2 FM	13
<b>Prisoner non-SUs</b>	2	3	3	3	11
<b>Visiting SUs</b>	5	9	11	8	34
<b>Visiting SU FI/FM supporters</b>	2 FM /6 FI	2 FM	2 FM	2 FM	14
<b>Visiting non-SUs</b>	1	2	2	*	5
<b>FSWs (n=8) **</b>	3	4	4	2	13
<b>Relevant prison staff &amp; other professionals (n=23) **</b>	6	6	6	7	25
<b>TOTALS</b>	34	33	34	27	128

\* Visiting non-SUs could not be identified during researcher's visit, as Visitors' Centre was closed for refurbishment

\*\* 5 FSWs and their two managers were interviewed twice

## **APPENDIX E: Agencies attending the Family Man and Fathers Inside What Next' days, organised by the FSWs (Lists provided by FSWs)**

### **Leeds**

*External Agencies:* Children's Centre; Tim Durkin Hostel; Next Step Advisory Group; Probation; Working Links; Benefits; D.I.P; West Yorkshire Chaplaincy; Together Women; Foundation Housing

### **Bristol**

*External Agencies:* Bristol Stop Smoking Service; Citizen's Advice Bureau; KWADS; Children and Families Services; Barnardos 'Echo' Project; Bristol Drug Project; Children Information Service

*Prison-based agencies:* Carats; Alabare Debt Advisory Service; Job Centre Plus; Prison Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

### **Belmarsh**

*External Agencies:* Sure Start Children's Centres; Greenwich Community Law Centre; Families Information Service (FIS); GLLaB; Greenwich Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP); Toynbee Hall; Foundation Training Company; NACRO; pact; Safeguarding Children; Pecan; Stepping Stones; Samaritans; Prisoners' Families and Friends

*Prison-based agencies and departments:* Diversity; Offender Management Unit (OMU) and Observation, Classification and Allocation (OCA); Library Services; Probation; Legal Services; Interventions and Relate; Thinking, Skills and Behaviour (TSB) and Committed Offences of Violence while under the influence of alcohol (COVAID); Job Centre Plus; Workshops; Carats; Housing; Education; Detoxification - Wilson Centre including Short Duration Drugs Programme (SDP); Benefits; Gym; Cass Unit (therapy unit for prisoners with mental health problems); Prison Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

### **Wandsworth**

*External Agencies:* Allotment Learning Project (London Action Trust); Prisoners' Families and Friends (Swan Centre); Children's Advocacy and Development (pact); Prospects; Probation; Parentline Plus

## **APPENDIX F: FOUR SHORT CASE STUDIES (APART FROM THE PRISONS, ALL NAMES AND PLACES HAVE BEEN CHANGED)**

### **LEEDS (TAKEN FROM QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS):**

Jean, the mother of a Mark, a remand prisoner awaiting sentence on a serious wounding charge, had no previous experience of courts or prison and was shocked and bewildered when her son (who had no partner or children) was taken into custody. Mark himself was suicidal. The FSW provided Jean with information about what would happen to Mark in prison and how he would be protected from taking his own life. She also saw Mark and was able to tell him and Jean about the 'Listeners' scheme in the prison. Jean went into the Visitors' Centre to see the FSW, and ask for help and advice, several times after this. On one occasion, Jean had received a phone call from Mark's solicitor, who had been to see Mark in the prison and been told that Mark refused to see him. Jean could not believe that this would be the case, since Mark was more concerned than anything to get his legal representation sorted out for court. She thus began to worry that he had either harmed himself or been harmed by someone. She phoned the FSW who, within 20 minutes, phoned back to say that Mark was fine, he had not refused to see the solicitor, there had simply been a 'mix-up' in the legal visits section. The promptness of this response and the FSW's link between the inside and the outside were of the essence to Jean, who commented ' Because you feel like a pariah, it was such a relief to be dealt with by such a pleasant person as the FSW, and put straight with kindness and empathy. It has been such a big help to me and my husband'.

### **WANDSWORTH (PROVIDED BY THE FSW):**

I saw Brian, a prisoner here, in April. He was in an extremely distressed state of mind regarding his 13 year-old son, Ian, who has autism. Prior to Brian coming into prison, he had joint custody of Ian with his ex-partner. He had a very good relationship with his son, maintaining regular contact and a good routine for him, especially important for his autism. Since Brian came to prison, however, this contact has been very difficult to maintain due to the infrequency and relative shortness of the visit. By the time Ian had settled into the visit, which took some time due to his autism, it was time to leave, leaving Ian, his father and mother all extremely distressed. After this, Brian advised his partner not to bring Ian to visit again as he did not want him to have to face a repeat of this ordeal. However, I was able to offer to advocate for the family to be able to have a double visit to allow Ian to have more time to settle into the environment of the visits hall and give him the best possible chance of maintaining a relationship with his father. I discussed this with Ian's mother and then with Visits, who agreed to this arrangement. Unfortunately, before the double visit could take place, Brian was relocated to another prison; nevertheless a principle of flexibility in this kind of case had been established.

### **BRISTOL (PROVIDED BY THE FSW):**

Marika, a Hungarian woman, and her three children who had all travelled from Stafford to visit her husband here, came to see me. Her English was not good, but she was prepared to accept help and gave me her name and address. She told me that her only income since her husband's arrest had come from selling the 'Big Issue'. She had been told that she was not entitled to benefits because of her origin. I was able to explain to her that now her husband was arrested she would be able to get help.

I spoke to Big Issue who had tried to get her engaged but she had not kept the appointment. There had apparently been some sort of issue with her working there - I knew no details, and they thought that she may have taken offence. So I spoke to Stafford Children's Services who were not aware of the family, but knew that there were several Hungarian families in that area of the town. They said that they would try to contact her but that often people moved as soon as they tried to contact them.

However, Marika did return to the prison again and told me that Stafford Children's Services had made contact with her. As a consequence, the children were put on their system, for receiving schooling, GP services and Marika began to receive benefit payments. The professionals from Children's Services had also let me know this, and it was helpful to have it confirmed by both parties that the referral had borne fruit.

### **BELMARSH (TAKEN FROM QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS):**

Dan, a first-time prisoner serving 3 years for Assault occasioning Actual Bodily Harm, was in his 30s with two children, aged 10 and 7 of whom he had joint custody with his ex-partner. He was able to speak to them on the phone every day and his new partner was able to bring them to visit him every two weeks. To increase his 'fathering' skills, he decided to do the 'Family Man' programme. Here he met the FSW, who liaised with his current partner, who also became his 'Supporter', to whom the FSW gave helpful information throughout the programme. The FSW also liaised with the children's school to ensure they could attend various activities and the Family Day during the school week. Dan also learned from the 'What Next' session, arranged by the FSW, about various educational courses, for which he has subsequently registered and was put in touch with the prison Probation Officer at this session. He commented that Family Man had affected him 'profoundly' and had helped and inspired him to send poems and story tapes to his children. He felt that the FSW's presence was important in enhancing the 'family learning' part of 'Family Man' and that this partnership (FM/FSW) was a very effective one. In his case, the FSW had not had to intervene in any 'crisis' situation, but for Dan, the link she provided with his Supporter, his children's school, and her organisation of activities which strengthened both his education/employment opportunities and his family ties, was vital in helping him progress along the path to resettlement.

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