



**Developments in the HM Prison Service and
Safe Ground 'Fathers Inside' and 'Family Man'
programmes during 2006-7:**

An independent review

By

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Developments in the HM Prison Service and Safe Ground 'Fathers Inside' and 'Family Man' programmes during 2006-7

1. Introduction

Family Man and *Fathers Inside* are two prison education programmes for male prisoners, commissioned by the Prison Service and developed by the charity Safe Ground, with dissemination supported and funded by the Offenders' Learning & Skills Unit, now the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). The programmes have been gradually developed since 1999 and refined in a number of prisons with the help of prisoners who have participated in them.

Both of these programmes constitute units of the NOCN (National Open College Network) Progression Qualifications. These qualifications comprise a range of units that provide opportunities for learners to develop skills in literacy and numeracy, learning to learn, and personal development. The qualifications are designed to be simultaneously flexible and achievable, with the learner attaining the size and level of qualification suitable to their needs and stage of learning.

The *Family Man* programme is structured to deliver the core Units of Family Relationships, and Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills, and includes assessment opportunities for the Key Skill of Communication, Level 1. *Fathers Inside* is structured to deliver the core Units of Developing Parenting Skills, Level 1 and Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills, Level 2. It includes assessment opportunities for the Key Skills of Communication, Level 1 and Adult Literacy, Core Curriculum Entry Level. Prison education departments may choose whether or not to offer these Units and may also determine the process and content of delivery. In common with other such Units, the Safe Ground programme Units each require a minimum of 20 contact hours, and are delivered by 2 Tutors over a period of 3 - 5 weeks.

The independent review process forms the evaluative element of Safe Ground's developmental programme of work, which is being funded by a Department of Education and Skills (DfES) 'Children, Young People and Families' grant, under the auspices of the Family Support and Development section. (The DfES became the Department of Children, Schools and Families in June 2007) The review was conducted over a 6-month period from April 2006 to September 2007.

1.1 Purpose

The Family Man and *Fathers Inside* Programmes have been externally evaluated (NFER, 2002; Boswell, Wedge & Price, 2004, 2005) and found to have produced positive changes in the attitudes and behaviour of programme participants. A more recent review has assessed what is known about the support which is available to enable participants to implement their programme learning, and about their progression to other appropriate learning opportunities. (Boswell, 2006). Safe Ground has aimed to draw on the recommendations of this review to develop arrangements to enhance the effectiveness of implementation for the future. The purpose of the present review is to examine the progress which has been made between July 2006 and September 2007.

It should be noted that a review is not a research study in its own right, but a process of summarising and drawing upon available evidence to make recommendations for future practice – in this case to Safe Ground, to the Dept. of Children, School and Families (DCSF, formerly DfES) and to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

1.2 Focus

The review is located in the context of the surrounding policy framework for supporting family ties and parenting from prison. It focuses specifically on the extent to which key recommendations from the 2006 review have been implemented by Safe Ground staff and others upon whom their implementation also depends. In particular, it examines the impact of the pilot Family Action Plan on programme participants and their relatives, and reports the views of staff and a range of national ‘players’ about the ongoing developments in Safe Ground’s work. Finally, it poses the outstanding questions which need to be answered by wider and longer-term research study.

1.3 Method

The present review first summarises the findings of the 2006 review and the main areas it identified for further action and development, which are the subject of the present enquiry. Accordingly, it then examines relevant documentary information, including that relating to Safe Ground’s most recent **Fathers Inside/Family Man Network** symposium and training events and the most recent programme monitoring and evaluation data. It further recounts the findings from a qualitative study of prisoner participants and relatives from 3 *Family Man* programmes at HMP Wandsworth, where the new Family Action Plan (FAP) has been piloted. For this purpose, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted face-to-face with a small sample of 5 prisoner

programme participants and by telephone with 11 relatives who had participated in the FAP. The sample was based on prisoners' and relatives' willingness and availability and also on relative contactability. To ascertain their views about ongoing developments, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the 3 members of Safe Ground's staff most responsible for implementing them, and with 11 national 'players' by telephone or e-mailed questionnaire, according to their convenience. Finally, the review draws on the above findings to make recommendations about further research and other action for Safe Ground in the interests of increasing its effectiveness in the arena of prisoner/family learning and resettlement.

1.4 Policy context

Any review of developments relating to prisoners, their children and families, prisoner education and resettlement has to take place within an understanding of the policy framework. This was clearly set out in the 2006 review and does not need repeating at length here. What is material, however, is that during the 8-year lifetime of the Safe Ground/HM Prison Service programmes, there have been significant policy developments in all these fields, both within and across the criminal justice and child care sectors. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), the precursor of the Children Act 2004, drew attention to the financial, emotional and health problems often suffered by children of prisoners. In 2003, a Directorate for Children and Families was established in the DfES under a Minister for Children, Young People and Families. In June 2007, the DfES was replaced by the Dept. for Children, Schools and Families.

The Offender Management Act received royal assent on July 26th 2007, its contents in respect of the freedom to commission services from the voluntary, charitable and private sectors much weakened by House of Lords amendments, though increased partnership working continues to be exhorted. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) still retains 7 'Pathways' to reducing re-offending (Home Office, 2004, 2006). The 2 pathways to which Safe Ground's work is most relevant are Pathways 2 and 6: 'Education, Training and Employment' and 'Children and Families of Offenders' respectively. Plans for Pathway 2 were set out in a Green Paper (Home Office *et al.* 2005) which noted, in section 71, that 'activities such as Family Learning courses can act as a "hook" to get reluctant learners involved in education'(p.39). Pathway 6 requires improved support systems and information-sharing to maximise the contribution of offenders' families to the reduction of re-offending. In June 2007, responsibility for all these activities was moved from the Home Office to a newly created Ministry of Justice.

The Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit assumed responsibility for prisoner education in 2001. In 2004, a new Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) was set up to address the learning needs of offenders both in custody and the community, via delivery arrangements planned and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). However, in July 2006, the LSC itself took over the responsibility for offender learning and skills, with the aim of creating a more integrated service. The LSC now manages planning, funding and commissioning of the new integrated OLASS in all nine English regions

It is in the context of these policy developments, therefore, that this review of developments in the work of HM Prison Service/Safe Ground's prisoner-based family relationships and parenting education programmes takes place.

2. The findings and recommendations of the 2005-6 Review

This section summarises these findings and recommendations and identifies the ways in which this review will assess the extent to which they have so far been acted upon. The purpose of the 2005-6 Review was to assess what was known about the existing arrangements for Safe Ground's *Family Man* and *Fathers Inside* (FM/FI) programme graduates to progress to other appropriate learning opportunities, and about the support available to them as they try to implement their learning, both from prison and release.

2.1 The policy context: The 2005-6 Review found that Safe Ground's work on parenting and father/child contact addressed the *Every Child Matters* 'Outcomes' framework, a number of the *Reducing Re-offending* Pathways, notably the 'Children and Families of Offenders' and 'Education, Training and Employment' pathways, and a cross-Government agenda of getting offenders 'hooked' into education through family learning. *The present review will examine the views of national 'players', who have to work to these policy agendas, as to whether Safe Ground's work continues to address them.*

2.2 The programme teaching manuals: These are currently the only bespoke manuals for combined educational delivery to prisoners. The 2005-6 Review highlighted that they contain specific guidance to establish individual learning progression routes, and to implement learning through family visits. There were no associated recommendations.

2.3 Progression and implementation evidence: Safe Ground's commitment to learning progression and implementation was recognized by most respondents to the 2005-6 Review. Its progression route to the *Time for Families* 'Couples' course was shown to be effective in the short-term. Two external evaluations had shown short-term and modest longer-term implementation of learning from these programmes. *The need for further outcome research was identified for both these processes and the present review elicits national 'players' views on this.*

2.4 Data collection: Relevant categories of data were being collected, which showed more than respectable levels of programme completion, awards, and learning progression for a challenging student group. However, only about one third of Tutors/Heads of Learning (HOLs) were routinely collecting and feeding in their data to the centre, so that the Safe Ground staff had to spend a great deal of their time pressing for its return in order to complete their national picture. *The need to inculcate the data collection practice was noted as being critical and, in addition to the most recent programme data being presented herein, Safe Ground staff have been interviewed about their contribution to the potential improvement of this process.*

2.5 Feeding programme data into OASys: The collection of learning progression information was the least complete of the data categories and this appeared to be because the relevant staff did not yet comprehend its importance and there was no-one co-ordinating the process for all programmes and prisoners. Policy-makers consulted for the 2005-6 Review were concerned that Safe Ground should review the effectiveness of its contribution to the programme recruitment/OASys Plan/Sentence Planning/Reducing re-offending flow. It was, however, planned that every prison should have established an Offender Management Unit by September 2006, and every prisoner should have been given a designated Offender Manager by November 2006. Offender Managers require progression information collection to feed into the OASys Plan which in turn will feed into the individual prisoner's Sentence Plan. The anticipated caveats here were the ability to appoint sufficient Offender Managers with no new resources and the fact that any new model, particularly one which is untested, takes at least 2 years to establish. *Safe Ground staff and the national 'players' are interviewed here about the extent to which relevant information is now being fed into OASys.*

2.6 The need for networking: With only a small number of staff, Safe Ground has initiated central data-collection systems and set up a network to support and embed its programmes and the prison-based staff running them. The *Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan* (Home Office, 2004) noted that the task of reducing re-offending cannot be the responsibility of one agency alone, but research on networking has shown how challenging this process can be (Goodwin *et al.* 2004). The 2005-6 Review identified that the requirement for its proper integration into practice needs to be in some way systematized and probably to come from policy-makers and individual prison Governors.

Nevertheless, Safe Ground has much expertise, particularly in its communication strengths, to offer to the continuing development of the networking process, and the views of their staff and the national 'players' are again elicited here about the ways in which this is developing.

2.7 Developing the Safe Ground Network Symposia: The FM/FI Network was found by the 2005-6 Review to be much valued by Tutors, HOLS, policy-makers and related agencies alike for the information-sharing and idea-generating provided in its symposia. However, participant feedback showed that there may be some occasions on which it is more appropriate to have separate meetings for particular sets of personnel, rather than trying to meet the needs of all these groups at one time. It was apparent that the networking and symposium planning pattern aimed to listen to what people said they needed, and to provide for it on the next occasion. *The present review examines this process in relation to the most recent Network developments and activities, to see whether this pattern has continued.*

2.8. Research and feedback from prisoners and families: The 2005-6 Review examined research on supporting parents (e.g. Boswell, 2002; Boswell and Wedge, 2002; Moran *et al.*, 2004; Quinton, 2004). This, together with feedback from prisoner and partner respondents, identified the very real tension between the need to respect their preference for self-reliance and the facilitation of their access to support services to foster resettlement. Innovative methods of engagement are needed to encourage and support the implementation of their learning to reduce their vulnerability to re-offending, particularly just after release. Most of these developments are in the hands of resettlement agencies. *However, since last year's review, Safe Ground has made its own response to this finding, by piloting a Family Action Plan (FAP) at Wandsworth Prison and the present review sought interview feedback from prisoners, their participating relatives and the Safe Ground FAP Manager about the process and effectiveness of this innovation.*

2.9. Safe Ground's educative purpose and unique selling point: The policy-makers consulted in the 2005-6 Review were concerned that Safe Ground should more clearly identify its educative purpose and unique selling point. *The national 'players' and Safe Ground staff were interviewed to find out how far this has been done.*

2.10 Reliable information exchange: The 2005-6 Review identified a clear need for reliable information exchange between Safe Ground and policy-makers so that future decision-making by all parties can be based upon sound evidence. *Safe Ground staff and the national 'players' were asked for their perceptions of this type of exchange over the last 12 months.*

2.11 The overall conclusion of the 2005-6 Review: This review highlighted the real achievements of Safe Ground in the process of developing and embedding

its programmes in the prison system. There was more evidence of its effectiveness in the fields of learning progression and implementation than is apparent in much of the prison education domain. It was recommended that it now needed to contribute its expertise to the further development of inter-agency working as its students progress through and beyond their sentence, and to press for hard research evidence about reconviction rates which will enable it to assess its longer-term effectiveness. *The present review will take all the evidence together to assess what progress has been made in these fields. This evidence is set out in terms of the documentary and programme data and Safe Ground staff interviews in Section 3; the prisoner, relative and FAP Manager interview data relating to the Family Action Plan in Section 4; and the national 'players' interview data in Section 5. Section 6 summarises the findings and Section 7 concludes the 2006-7 Review.*

3. Monitoring the programmes and developing the FM/FI Network

Safe Ground has recognized, for some time, the importance of gathering relevant data about its 2 programmes and has been refining its central database over the last year. The 2005-6 Review showed very respectable numbers of programme completion, awards and progression activity for this challenging prisoner group, though it had to be acknowledged that some of these data were incomplete. Safe Ground staff had had to spend disproportionate amounts of time trying to contact prison-based programme staff to ask them to collect and return their data. Although this problem often related to understandable reasons of heavy Tutor workloads and high prisoner turnover, the 2005-6 Review nonetheless noted a critical need to find a way to integrate this practice so that more could be learned from a reliable dataset about programme outcomes. This section provides up-to-date data from the **FM/FI** programmes and also from interviews with Safe Ground staff in respect of the way in which the **FM/FI Network** facility has been developed to enhance the data-gathering process. However, it is necessary to note from the start that the programme data relating to 2006 -7 in **Tables 1 - 5** below remain incomplete at the time of writing, since 5 prisons have not returned some or all of their monitoring data. While this partially provides the answer to the issue raised in the 2005-6 Review, the reasons for it will also be outlined below.

3.1 Programme completion, awards and learning progression information

Table 1 below summarises the numbers and types of Safe Ground programmes delivered at a range of prisons over the last 4 years. (See **Appendix 1** for a list of prisons delivering programmes between April 2006 – August 2007). Although they have continued to work with prison-based teachers on the need to return data, Safe Ground staff emphasise that this process remains hampered by the fact that it is not prioritized by the teachers’ managers, nor is it part of the education contractors’ agreement with the LSC to collect these data. Thus ‘We have had to pressgag this information out of teachers, use all sorts of techniques – it has been immensely time-consuming’.

Table 1: Number of <i>Family Man</i> & <i>Fathers Inside</i> prison programmes delivered between April 2003 & March 2007					
YEAR					
PROGRAMME TYPE	2003-4 (Yr. 1)	(2004-5) (Yr. 2)	2005-6 (Yr. 3)	2006-7 (Yr. 4)	GRAND TOTALS
Family Man	10	28	31	25	94
Fathers Inside	7	39	44	23	115
TOTAL PROGS. DELIVERED	17	67	75	48	207
TOTAL PRISONS DELIVERING PROGS.	9	28	23	23	

It is apparent that the number of programmes being delivered increased steeply in Year 2 (probably as they were becoming known), and more modestly in Year 3, though reduced notably in Year 4. For the first 3 years, there were significantly more *Fathers Inside* than *Family Man* programmes being run - generally thought to have followed from the surge of publicity and interest generated by the *Fathers Inside* programme launch in the House of Commons in July 2004. Fewer prisons delivered either programme in Year 3 than in Year 2, but **more** programmes were delivered in Year 3. In Year 4 there was a noticeable decline in programme numbers, but the number of prisons delivering them had remained constant since Year 3, almost meeting the DfES target for Safe Ground programmes to be running in 24 prisons during Year 4 (2006-7). The figures for Year 5 (2007-8) are not included here because they are only partial at this stage, but it is useful to note that, so far this year, 19 prisons are running programmes with possibly more to come. It is likewise useful to note that 5 prisons which ran programmes in Year 4 ceased to run them in Year 5 – according to Safe Ground staff, for reasons of staff illness or lack of management support – but that 5 other prisons are running programmes for the first time in Year 5. Last year’s Review

suggested that the **FM/FI** programmes were starting to become more effectively embedded in the prisons which did run them and, while Safe Ground staff continue to seek the interest of other prisons in the programmes, interviews with them indicate that their present focus is to work at a more strategic level with the existing prisons in the **Network** with a view to the further inculcation of good practice.

Table 2: Numbers & types of prison delivering <i>Family Man & Fathers Inside</i> programmes April 2003 - March 2007				
PRISON INMATE CATEGORY	YEAR			
	2003-4 (Yr. 1)	2004-5 (Yr.2)	2005-6 (Yr.3)	2006-7 (Yr.4)
A/B	0	3	3	2
B/Local	6	14	9	11
C	2	6	7	5
YOI	1	5	4	5
TOTAL PRISONS	9	28	23	23

Table 2 above shows that all prison security categories consistently deliver these programmes, with minor fluctuations across the 4 years. Reasons given to Safe Ground staff for these latter have again included staff shortages and lack of management support as well as insufficient funds and venue problems. It is particularly interesting, however, that small numbers of both top security and YOI (Young Offender Institution) establishments run these programmes, given periodic suggestions that they are not suitable for such inmates. In respect of the top security prisons, the transcript of the House of Lords Symposium showed that the Governor of one of them has no difficulty in fully endorsing the programme being run in that establishment. This indicates the level of flexibility of the programmes, though there is a pervading problem of high prisoner turnover which makes the issue of wider prison programming and management, discussed in Section 3.2, particularly important.

Table 3 below sets out the programme commencement and completion figures, with numbers of awards and post-programme learning progressions. Some students have gained more than one award and/or progressed to more than one learning opportunity. It is important to note that figures for 2006-7 remain incomplete.

Table 3: Commencement, completion, award and progression figures for students on Safe Ground programmes April 2003 - March 2007					
YEAR					
PROGRAMME INFORMATION	2003-4 (Yr. 1)	2004-5 (Yr.2)	2005-6 (Yr.3)	2006-7 (Yr.4) * Data incomplete	TOTALS for 4 yrs. so far
Commencements	267	960	983	769	2,979
Completions	201	781	769	619	2,370
No. of students gaining awards	165 (82%)	697 (89%)	686 (88%)	401 (65%)	1,949 (82%)
No. of awards gained	365	1,571	1,660	1,429	5,007
Post-programme progression to further learning opportunities (not including 130 transferred, released or unemployed)	171	821	782	839	2,613

Table 3 above shows that the numbers of students commencing and completing programmes in Year 2 had virtually quadrupled from the year before but remained at around the same level for Year 3, the period during which fewer prisons were running more programmes. This figure has dropped somewhat for Year 4, due largely to an emerging pattern of an average 3 month time lapse in award numbers being confirmed to Safe Ground. With the missing data from 5 prisons added, the figures would be likely to average out in a similar fashion. Likewise, the number of awards gained in Year 2 had more than quadrupled since Year 1, had increased slightly with a similar prisoner population in Year 3, and appeared to be heading towards a similar total in Year 4. The number of post-programme progressions, which also more than quadrupled in Year 2 appeared to have reduced somewhat in Year 3, but had already begun to increase in Year 4. However, it is important again to emphasise that the information provision to Safe Ground about progression opportunities over Years 1 - 3 in particular was the least reliable of the data collection processes at that time, and so can be regarded as giving an indication rather than a comprehensive picture.

Tables 4 and **5** below provide a more detailed breakdown of the types of award and progression referred to in **Table 3** above.

Table 4: Types of awards gained by Safe Ground programme students April 2003 - March 2007					
AWARDS	2003-4 (Yr. 1)	2004-5 (Yr. 2)	2005-6 (Yr. 3)	2006-7 (Yr. 4) * Data incomplete	TOTALS for 4 yrs. so far
FR Entry	4	-	6	10	20
FR Level 1	91	447	334	188	1,060
FR Level 2	1	4	49	125	179
FR TOTALS	96	451	389	323	1,259
PC Entry	-	1	-	-	1
PC Level 1	69	239	322	244	874
PC Level 2	-	6	43	52	101
PC TOTALS	69	246	365	296	976
GTW Entry	2	-	4	11	17
GTW Level 1	41	152	12	95	300
GTW Level 2	68	507	613	363	1,551
GTW TOTALS	111	659	629	469	1,868
KSC Level 1	64	160	184	128	536
KSC Level 2	-	-	-	5	5
KSC Level 4	-	4	-	-	4
KSC TOTALS	64	164	184	133	545
AL Entry	-	10	13	-	23
AL Level 1	26	45	48	55	174
AL Level 2	-	8	8	8	24
AL TOTALS	26	63	69	63	221
OCN Drama	-	6	24	-	30
Other	NC	NC	NC	127	127
GRAND TOTALS	366	1,589	1,660	1,411	5,026
Key: FR - Family Relationships; PC - Parentcraft; GTW - Group and Teamwork; KSC - Key Skills Communication; AL - Adult Literacy; OCN - Open College Network; NC - Not collected					

It can be seen from **Table 4** that, in Year 2, the numbers in all award categories increased dramatically as more prisons started to run **FM/FI** programmes. In Year 3, when prison numbers reduced but programmes increased, numbers in most categories of award again increased, with those in Adult Literacy remaining relatively stable and those in Family Relationships reducing somewhat. Only 211 men (12%) completing the programmes did not gain an award over Years 1 - 3. Even though the data are incomplete, it is instructive also

to note that the figures for awards in 2006-7 already show an increase for Family Relationships Entry and Level 2, Parentcraft Level 2, Group and Teamwork Entry and Level 1, and Adult Literacy Level 1. Over 5,000 Awards in the space of 4 years so far amount to a very considerable achievement by the prisoner students and must also reflect well on those teaching the programmes. The figures in **Table 4** also show that the majority of those achievements have been at Levels 1 and 2.

Table 5 below, provides a break-down of the types of progression routes which programme graduates have taken. Although the data are incomplete across all years, this table nevertheless affords an indication of the trends towards education, employment and/or specialist learning opportunities.

Table 5: Post-programme progression numbers and types April 2003 - March 2007					
	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	TOTALS for 4 yrs. so far
Family visits	59	273	193	193	718
New to Education after FM/FI	45	188	146	101	480
Return to Education after FM/FI	38	211	246	170	665
New to work after FM/FI	-	23	54	93	170
Return to work after FM/FI	26	96	71	107	300
Offending Behaviour programme	3	19	23	11	56
Transferred *	-	9	17	38	64
Released *	-	7	2	31	40
Listeners' course	-	-	2	9	11
Relationships course	-	7	14	1	22
Storybook Dads	-	3	13	102	118
Drugs and Alcohol course	-	-	5	20	25
Unemployed *	4	8	1	13	26
Other	-	1	15	32	48
TOTAL PROGRESSION NOS.	171	821	782	839	2,613
* (not including 130 who were transferred, released or unemployed)					

Table 5 above shows that the majority of prisoner graduates over the last 4 years took progression routes which involved Family Visits and entering or re-entering education or work programmes. It is also important to note that 42% of those moving into education were doing so for the first time, as were 47% of those moving into work, the latter appearing to be a steadily rising trend. Written and verbal prisoner feedback over the lifetime of **FM/FI** suggest that this is often a consequence of the confidence and sense of achievement acquired on the Safe Ground programmes. The numbers moving into the Storybook Dads scheme,

where fathers record bedtime stories to send to their children, have dramatically increased in the last year. Relatively small numbers have moved into Offending Behaviour Programmes; Relationships courses (e.g. 'Relate', 'Couples'); the Listeners' course; and drugs and alcohol courses (e.g. RAPT). It was not known whether transferred or released students were pursuing progression opportunities; only very small numbers were recorded as being unemployed, and this would not necessarily be from choice. (**NB:** Numbers in these last 3 categories were not included in the total number of post-programme progressions recorded in **Tables 3** and **5** above.)

Overall, **Tables 1 - 5** in this section show that relevant categories of data upon which to assess the quantity and quality of programme delivery and achievement continue to be collected but that, despite very concerted efforts from Safe Ground staff (further recounted in Section **3.2**) the problem of non-returns from a **minority** of prisons still dogs the effort to produce a consistently comprehensive picture of the fruits of their activities. They do, however, show that the target number of 24 prisons running/planning to run the programmes over the period 2005-6 was very nearly met. It is clear that a range of progression routes, including those for family learning or relationship initiatives, is being offered by prisons and followed by a large number of programme graduates. Since last year, some work has been put into the further development and refinement of the monitoring database. The main challenge now is to continue to seek a way to ensure that programme staff make the data collection process part of their *modus operandi*. This will be further addressed in Section **3.2** below.

3.2 Evidence relating to network and symposium development

The **Family Man and Fathers Inside Network** was initiated by Safe Ground in 2005 for the purpose of sharing and embedding learning between Safe Ground staff, programme graduates, ex-offenders, Tutors, HOLS, Prison Governors, Resettlement Managers, statutory and voluntary family support and educational organization representatives, Government representatives, and policy-makers. The main vehicle for the networking process has hitherto been the 3 **Network** symposia, the first at the Prison Service Training College, Newbold Revel, the second at Wandsworth Prison, and third at the House of Lords. The 2005-6 Review found that evaluations from the first two symposia had been very positive in relation to the information and ideas shared and generated, but some participants had also expressed the view that there was a need for separate events for particular groups involved in the **Network**.

The new DfES funding from 2006 – 2009 enabled Safe Ground to take heed of these and other concerns, and to plan the development of the **Network** in a more strategic fashion. Over the last 12 months it has taken time to refine its aims and to clarify that running the **Network** involves the following activities:

- Networking – regular contact with prisons via email, telephone and visits, co-ordination of events
- Teacher support and training
- Publicity – website, newsletter, network emails, dissemination at events
- Programme monitoring – data collection, entry, analysis, report
- Recruitment of new prisons
- Progress reports – to Director, Trustees, DfES/NOMS

Some progress has been made on all these fronts but, given the ‘ongoing battle to collect data’ described by one of the Safe Ground staff, a priority over the last 12 months has been to commence work on this problem. Over time, this will involve a programme of strategy tours of every prison running **FM/FI** programmes, to spread best practice, improve communication between departments and show how progression routes can be built up. Further training events for Tutors are also planned and one took place at HMP Wandsworth over 2 days in March 2007, focusing on the linked issues of recruitment, collecting and using data, progression routes, the FAP and visits, and links with OASys.

Over the last year, Wandsworth has been the focus for developing and refining a model of good practice for the **FM** programme and it is planned that this will continue over the next 2 years. As a consequence, internal evaluation has been undertaken, including seeking feedback from 121 FM graduates over 3 years, a third of whom were released. Of this latter group, only 7 responded, but did so enthusiastically, expressing fond memories of the programmes and providing information about their employment, continuing education and family relationships. As well as the finding that they remaining positive, some time after the programme, about progression and implementation of learning, it was also found that the majority remaining in prison now have enhanced status, 88% have not had post-programme adjudications, and over 50% have experienced OASys (though this also means that nearly 50% have not, despite Offender Management theoretically being in place from November 2006). The group ethos and bond had remained strong within this body of respondents from a range of ages and ethnic backgrounds. Recommendations for future data collection information were included in this internal report and a Safe Ground staff member had a 3-day secondment to the Offending Behaviour Programme Unit (OBPU) to find out more about ways in which behaviour change before and after the programmes could be measured to assess quality of delivery. Staff working on accredited programmes have to send in their data to the OBPU, which led the Safe Ground staff member to ask whether the **FM/FI** programmes need to be moved towards a different form of accreditation, more in line with that of the OBPU, and also whether Safe Ground should employ a specialist in data collection and analysis to ensure this process is conducted reliably. In respect of accreditation, it would be necessary to develop both a theory manual and a ‘Training the Trainers’ manual.

The 2-day training process drew on the consistently-collected Wandsworth programme data and internal evaluation to demonstrate achievements in terms of recruitment, retention, awards, progressions etc. and, thus, to emphasise the reason for asking Tutors to collect it. Showing them, that, for example, the average programme completion rate is 11 students, whereas it could be as many as 16, highlights that recruitment and pre-programme planning methods could be more efficient. In turn this points to the need for a strong culture of data collection. A written feedback report from 2 of the 12 Tutors who attended this training event, showed that they had understood the messages being put across and had developed a 12-point action plan from it to implement in their own prison.

The symposium at the House of Lords in March 2007 was also a response to the expressed need for discrete events, this time for managers and policy people. Its theme was the programming of **FM/FI** in prisons, designed to address the issue raised in the 2005-6 Review about the need for those in authority to take their own responsibility for the offender management process. Recorded by a stenographer, the symposium was addressed by Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC, by the Chief Executive and *Family Man* Manager of Safe Ground, by the Governors of HMPs Belmarsh and Wandsworth and their staff, a released graduate of *Family Man* and myself as author of the 2005-6 Review. Delegates were encouraged to consider the benefits and challenges of the programmes as recounted from the various speakers' viewpoints. They were also provided with data on recruitment, retention and progression routes and invited to consider potential improvements they could make to programming and management of **FM/FI** in their establishments.

The next discrete event being planned is a seminar with education contractors who are funded by the Learning and Skills Council to control education in prisons. Although they are aware that some people perceive these events to be self-promoting, Safe Ground staff consider that they are constantly engaging in a process of getting the message through to others about the action they need to take to move prisoners towards successful resettlement. As one staff member commented, 'It feels like we're permanently selling double glazing!'.

Further plans include involving Theatre in Education to help the Wandsworth students to put on a play for children incorporating Oscar Wilde's story, 'The Selfish Giant' which is one of the drama-based features of the *Family Man* programme. Staff also consider that they need to join forces more with related voluntary sector bodies and to become more involved with policy groups.

3.3 In summary

This section has reported the documentary evidence about prisons, programmes, awards, and what graduates do after completing them. The

emphasis over the last year has been upon fewer prisons running the programmes but running them well and in developing and refining a model for good practice. Commencement, completion, award and progression data show that the programmes are operating effectively – but that some of the data continue to be incomplete and the collection and feed-in process to the centre are not as yet treated as routine by programme staff, despite innovative efforts via training and the **FM/FI Network** to bring this about during the last year. The difficulty of this for an organisation which is seeking to be evidence-based cannot be over-estimated. One staff member described it thus:

It's a psychological exercise to bring about real change. It's slow, frustrating, lonely and doesn't feel collaborative. Words like 'partnership' don't feel real. Pioneering is what a charity has to do.

The suggested moves towards accreditation and the employment of a specialist consultant or manager in data collection and analysis would perhaps provide a way forward here, though both have resource implications which may prove prohibitive.

4. The Family Action Plan

For the purposes of this part of the review, face-to-face interviews were conducted at Wandsworth Prison with 5 prisoners who had participated in one of the three *Family Man* programmes in which the Family Action Plan (FAP) was being piloted during 2006-7. Safe Ground's FAP manager was also interviewed, providing information on the FAP process. Subsequently, 11 relatives who had been to the prison to participate in the FAP were interviewed by telephone.

4.1 FAP - the concept and aims

The 2005-6 Review referred to the need for innovative methods of engagement to support and foster the implementation of prisoner learning on the Safe Ground programmes (Section 2.8). Wider feedback from those with knowledge of prison-based education programmes also advocated the desirability of greater family participation in the programmes to help bring this about. Families themselves have articulated the importance of their involvement in the prisoner's sentence and post-release planning generally (see, for example, Henderson,

2007). Although Safe Ground clearly cannot control the whole of this process, for which resettlement agencies further down the line have a major responsibility, Safe Ground did decide to increase its own contribution, particularly in light of the need for a more structured approach to the Children and Families Pathway. This came in the form of the FAP, which was piloted at HMP Wandsworth as part of the *Family Man* programme between November 2006 and March 2007. (There is a Service Level agreement with Wandsworth to continue this work until 2009) The FAP operates in partnership with PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) which runs the Visitors' Centre at Wandsworth. Safe Ground and PACT had worked together for 2 years to bring this partnership about.

The FAP aims to further the implementation of prisoner and family learning by involving relatives in a 2-part structured programme which provides them with information about progression routes into resettlement, and with opportunities to communicate with the prison about their respective aims in this process. (Relatives are defined for this purpose as: partners; blood relatives; immediate family/children; and, under special circumstances, family friends and foster parents.) The process involves the prisoner identifying an appropriate relative to take part in what began as a one-day prison-based workshop split into 2 halves and has evolved into a 2-day event, with each day a week apart. In respect of this change, the FAP manager summarized the advantages as lying in: the ability to hold the first day in the more relaxed and familiar setting of the Visitors' Centre, outside of the prison itself; to have a break, some fresh air and a smoke if they wished; and a week to digest the information they had been given and to reflect on issues they might wish to discuss with their prisoner relative and questions they might wish to ask of the agencies represented at the 'What Next?' session.

On the first day of the FAP, the (newly-appointed for the purpose) FAP manager, a member of PACT, and a Prison Officer Co-ordinator attached to the *Family Man* programme, meet with the relatives on their own. Here they are given a brief overview of the programme, its potential achievements and awards and shown a video and the men's programme portfolios. They are also introduced to the concept of a 'Life Plan', and asked to consider the goals they would like their prisoner relative to focus on and to realise over an appropriate time scale. Finally they are provided with a list and brief description of the agencies and departments being represented on the second day, the 'What Next?' session, where prisoners and relatives can meet and hear from those who might support them in achieving their life plans. Also present at the first session are staff from Prisoners' Families and Friends Service, an independent voluntary agency which aims to provide the families and friends of anyone sentenced to imprisonment or remanded in custody with advice, information, support and friendship.

At the second session, the prisoners and their relatives are able to go together to the range of tables where agencies' roles are set out, and find out about what they have to offer to the prisoner and/or family. Notably, these agencies include

Education, Housing, CARATS, ETS, Industries, Job Centre, RAPT, Relate, Homework Club and Chaplaincy. The prisoners and relatives should then write down who they have spoken to and what further action is planned as a result. They then share the goals they have each written down and work together on a second draft of the life plan, which then becomes the Family Action Plan. This is then photo-copied and given to both parties. Part of the Prison Officer Co-ordinator's role is to try and make sure that steps along the way to the goals identified in the FAP are implemented, thus connecting with the OASys and Offender Management process.

The FAP manager emphasized that the FAP is a Family Relationships objective, an attempt to make such an objective a little more concrete than hitherto. Feedback from the relatives about their experience is regarded as very important and the FAP manager has instigated a telephone interview with them a few months after they participate in the FAP, when their comments are recorded on an evaluation form. This form has been piloted and refined over time.

Security is always a priority when relatives visit prisons, and the FAP manager takes this very seriously, being quite clear with relatives that they must undergo the necessary security checks, including co-operating with 'drugs dogs', and bringing with them evidence of identity. It is also expected that they will attend both FAP days - if they do not come to the first, they cannot then come to the second. So far, most relatives appear to have taken heed of these requirements. The FAP manager also stressed the wider importance of FAP staff maintaining good relationships with Prison Officer staff, keeping them informed and seeking feedback from them - and believed that, as a result, not only the *Family Man* programme but also the FAP process was well-integrated in the prison.

From April 2007, Safe Ground has been working to develop a 'FAP Resource' for use in male prisons. This will include marketing materials, guidelines and activities that enable prisoners' relatives (including children) to be involved in the education and rehabilitation of that prisoner while he is in prison, and also in appropriate counselling and family ties initiatives. Safe Ground further aims to recruit consultants from PACT, Relate, One-Plus-One, Adfam, and Time for Families to contribute to the Resource and to some of the programme sessions, starting in 2008. The FAP manager's hope is that these consultants will be able to add ingredients of greater depth to the Action Plans. During 2008, also, it is planned to trial the Resource in 3 other male prisons, with the aim of launching it nationally in 2009. As with the relatives' feedback on the FAP pilots, Safe Ground is concerned to ensure that this process will be properly evaluated and has initiated discussions with NOMS RDS (Research Development and Statistics Directorate) and the DCSF to this end.

In the brief it has set out for the FAP consultants, Safe Ground explains its longer-term aims:

The FAP Project will provide a vehicle for HM Prison Service, PACT and family ties agencies to develop a more strategic and collaborative approach to working with prisoners' relatives. We anticipate that the Project will produce working practices that will effect greater communication and involvement between prisoners' relatives and organisations specialising in counselling/support work. The Project's ultimate aim is for FAP to be managed and delivered by prison staff, teachers and voluntary sector workers in other prisons.

Clearly, much of this work remains to be developed, but its foundations are being laid by the pilot project, and the views of prisoners and relatives who participated in this will now be recounted.

4.2 Views from the *Family Man* prisoner graduates

The 5 prisoner graduates of *Family Man* were asked about various aspects of their experiences of undertaking the programme, about the FAP, whether they were moving on to other forms of learning, and their plans for the future. All were extremely positive about the experience of attending *Family Man*, describing it as 'excellent', 'interesting' or both. All felt the programme had helped to strengthen their relationships with their children, and all could name specific pieces of learning, usually surrounding the need for them to stop being absorbed in their own problems and to take some responsibility for their families. All had applied for, or were already on other programmes and had clear plans as to what they would do on release. When asked to describe their experience of doing the FAP, these were their replies:

Our two sets of objectives met! They were about me being more positive in our relationship, taking heed more with our kids, spending more time with them and taking more time to be with the family. It was surprising that we were both thinking the same, and confirmed for me that I had made the right choice of partner. She tends to want to sit down and talk anyway, but we both do it more now. I was always the one putting my hand in my pocket. Now we sit down and talk more about the kids; not just when things go wrong, but all the time.

It was good. I could predict what my wife would say – that she wanted me home more in the evenings. (I previously worked unsocial hours.) We have talked and I will try to get a job with more social hours.

My partner thought I spent more time with my family than with her and my son. When I look back, I can see it – I was always at my sister's. I went on holiday with my Mum and my sister and she felt like she was tagging along. She would like to spend more time with me. She's never missed a visit –

came 4 times a week when I was on remand. When I come out, I'll make more time for her and my son.

My girlfriend can still picture that day – it made a big impact on her. She saw my work and she felt involved in the course. We had the FAP Day in the Health Care Centre. That was alright – quite good. Our action plans were exactly the same: get a job, be busy and focused, go to my Mum's (in a different area) and find a house near her; keep away from bad company and stop being generous!

A female cousin of mine came in. She was very positive and proud that I'm doing something constructive. The goals we set out were both along the same lines – accommodation and employment. I was working for an agency before I came to prison and I am going to try and get that job back. I did the crime because of mounting debts – we were due to be evicted. My Probation Officer is helping to find accommodation.

These quotations show that programme graduates appreciated and felt they benefited from having their relatives involved in the programme at the FAP stage. They were clearly pleased that, as was mostly the case, they and their relatives had both identified the same sets of goals, showing that their own thinking and planning were grounded in the reality of their return to their communities. Asked about their hopes and fears for this return, almost all of these concerned accommodation, employment (which they knew would be difficult with a criminal record), and a smooth return to family life. In respect of this latter, they were realistic about the potential difficulties:

How will my family be when I do come out? My wife's working, my son's in nursery – where do I fit in? We could do with a course refresher nearer to release, to help us all re-integrate, 'mould back' into our families.

First and foremost, I want to get back into my family life. Then I want to get back into my old business and live a normal, stable life (I was out for ten years before this sentence). I know I have to stay away from bad company, and the way to do this is stick with my family.

When asked whether they and/or their families were being given enough professional support to help them avoid offending in the future, only one person felt this to be the case, via a supportive, interested Probation Officer. However, two also said that they and their families preferred not to rely on external support (confirming the literature review findings from the 2005-6 Review). Nevertheless, the two quotations cited in the previous paragraph illustrate the vulnerability of these men on release and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a Probation Officer/Offender Manager with the 'supportive, interested' qualities described by one of the respondents above, whom people viewed as

accessible and approachable, could not make a significant difference to their susceptibility to re-offending at this time.

Finally, these programme graduates were asked for any other observations about the *Family Man* programme, including the FAP, and 4 chose to comment as follows:

It's a very good course. I recommend it to everyone, especially those who tend to cut themselves off in the prison. The teaching methods are very good and we really bonded as a group.

It's a very good course – though perhaps would have been better nearer to release; or to have a 'refresher' then. It was a great family visit – so good to sit down with my family and have breakfast, read and paint with the children.

What a good thing they've brought it into the prison system! I would do it again. I got 4 others to do it too. It's like I knew the things they taught, but I took them for granted. Your eyes are open, but not fully open. The teachers are excellent and very patient.

*I totally enjoyed it, which is why I came back to the programme to help teach it. Doing this programme has helped me more to understand other courses. I learned that we can still be with our families mentally and ask what's **really** going on in their lives. My Mum and girlfriend have noticed a change. I'm more interested in them in a positive way.*

These comments highlight the enthusiasm of the men for the programme, the importance of its group and teamwork ethos, and the ways in which they find it linked into their family relationships and further learning. The issue of a refresher course nearer the time of release is again raised (by a different respondent) and again denotes the importance of increased support at that time. The FAP is an important contributor to this in that it has provided focus upon the action which will be needed but it will largely be the role of other relevant professionals to help prisoners take this action forward to implementation.

4.3 Views from the FAP relatives

Over the 3 *Family Man* programmes delivered at HMP Wandsworth between November 2006 and March 2007, 35 men attended, of whom 34 had relatives attending the FAP. (A further relative did not attend the FAP, but did have a meeting with the FAP Manager.) Of these 34, there were eleven who were both contactable and had agreed to participate in the research. They were all interviewed by telephone 3 – 6 months after they had attended the FAP days, depending on the timing of the programme they had been attached to.

Constituting almost a third of the FAP relatives, this group appeared to be reasonably representative (although with necessary caveats about the reasons why some potential respondents may be uncontactable or unwilling to participate). Of this group of respondents, 7 described themselves as partner/wife/fiancée/girlfriend, 2 as former partners, one as an aunt and one as a family friend. Of the last two, one prisoner did not have children and the other was not in touch with children he had had a long time ago with a former partner. Six from the 'partner' group of 7, but only one of the ex-partners, had children belonging to the prisoner. When asked if the programme had made the prisoner's relationship with his children any stronger, all 7 agreed that it had. However, one reported reluctance on the part of an older teenage child to visit his father because of the nature of his offence, and another stressed that the relationship had already been close prior to the programme.

Almost all of these relatives appeared to be aware of the men's progression plans to other courses or training opportunities, and were positive about this. The FAP process had frequently helped to make them aware of what was available and of the men's preferences in this regard. The respondents were asked to describe their experiences of the FAP and any differences it had made to them or their families. The quotations below come from 6 of the 7 partners:

The FAP day was well-organised and this helped me to feel comfortable and confident. We both identified the same aims, though we used different words to describe them. They were for him to get a job, be a better communicator and more considerate. He was released recently and so far he is following these aims through. Before, we'd just discuss everyday things, but now we're much more open. He plays snooker, but he's in a lot more, sees Probation and spends time with the children.

The FAP helped him to identify his practical aims and the need to keep up good communication with me and his parents, helping us to understand why he did what he did. It was great to have a long period to speak in an informal, relaxed way, but about serious things. Also our 2-year old son enjoyed the Family Day, all the activities and the chance to play with his Dad.

We had the same aims – I was really surprised! We agreed that he should do as much studying as possible in prison to keep him focused, to find a job in the future, and avoid the influence of his old friends. It's made a big difference to me to know what he's doing in there – that it's interesting, it's not a dungeon and they're not in chains! His daughter went in with her Mum on the Family Day – the first time since he went to jail – and she really enjoyed it.

Our objectives for the FAP were similar. It's so different from normal visits. I also found out about more sources of support for both of us. Before, I had felt on my own with this. It helped to see him wanting to change, do courses. It

lightened my view of things. I'm not so angry any more. Also the programme helped him understand that our son needs him. He gets involved in his homework now and is much more attentive to him. It's helped [our son] cope with his Dad being in prison.

It was bizarre! We said exactly the same things. It proved to me that he knows what he needs to do – he just hasn't done it before. I was quite excited about the course – it was as if I was doing it! I think the whole prison should do it – make it compulsory.

I found it fantastic! We both put similar things in the FAP – what we needed to achieve together and for ourselves individually. In relation to the children, we are working better together. It's also opened my eyes up to other organizations that can help us, with people going through the same thing. We're not alone. Our communication has never been so good. We said only the other day what a shame it is we didn't have this before, to stop things escalating.

Clearly, these partners have been very affected by their experience of participating in the FAP. Like some of the prisoner graduates, they were particularly surprised to find that they shared the same aims as their partner. The fact that this was such a revelation strongly points to the crucial nature of opening up this structured opportunity for communication between prisoners and their families.

However, it is also important to recount the observations of the partner who had a different experience at the time of the FAP, but nevertheless found it bore fruit later on:

We had completely different aims! I wrote more about feelings and he wrote more about practical goals. I didn't quite understand what was expected of us. There were too many different sheets of paper – one would have been enough to cover everything. But by the end of it all, we did understand each other! Now I feel like he knows me, it's made things easier and he's more willing to listen to me and the children now.

It may be that there is an issue here for Safe Ground staff about making quite sure that participants understand what is being asked of them. However, it also shows that the exercise of setting out aims and then comparing them is important not so much for its revelation of similarity or difference, but for what that revelation then leads to in terms of improved communication. It is also clear from almost all these quotations that partners felt that prisoners' relationships with their children had improved **as a result** of improved communication between their parents. This is a situation borne out in parenting literature relating both to children of prisoners and to children separated from a parent for other reasons (Biller, 1993; Arendell, 1995; Boswell and Wedge, 2002; Ayre,

Philbrick and Reiss, 2006). The fact that this communication had taken place through the deliberate involvement of family members in a prison-based programme was clearly a tribute to the FAP process and the staff running it.

The FAP experiences of the two ex-partners, aunt and family friend were also generally positive, though, perhaps because of their lower level of emotional involvement, these were not expressed quite so intensely. However, the ex-partner with the prisoner's children felt that they had benefited from the Family Day, and the other ex-partner and aunt spoke of the prisoner making efforts to mend wider family relationships.

As with the prisoner respondents, these relatives' hopes and fears tended to centre around employment, accommodation (for some), family relationships and re-offending. This is a further reminder of the need for supportive underpinnings to these resettlement factors at the time of release. The relatives were broadly divided as to the extent of the help available either to the prisoners or themselves/their families. Two spoke of a supportive Probation officer; two had tried to make such contact themselves but had been told Probation involvement was not available to them. Three knew of the Action for Prisoners helpline; two said they did not themselves need support. They had been made aware of options for seeking support during the FAP 'What Next?' day and several said that what was important was having this knowledge, even if they chose not to take advantage of it.

Finally, this group of relatives was asked if they had any further comments to make about the *Family Man* programme or the FAP. All of them chose to make such a comment and these are reproduced in full below:

It was just very good!

Very positive. It's really nice that somebody recognises that the families outside have difficulties too and need to be involved in the programme.

It would be a good idea to keep the course going beyond the 5 weeks. It gives them self-esteem, and this is what he had after the course. Before, his basic skills were very low level and he was ashamed. But FM helped him improve these and with the FAP too, he's up for more education and training.

I think the course was very good.

Doing it has made him think some more about these things and what he needs to do implement them. But he's made me so many promises, I need to wait and see if he does what he says he'll do!

*Very worthwhile. It makes them think more concretely and makes them appreciate what *we're* going through. The FAP shows he's **doing** something*

about it instead of just being remorseful – and it has helped to keep our relationship going.

I spoke to all the staff and told them it should be extended to other prisons. It's a great course and everyone should have access to it.

A very good course. It seemed to make a very big difference to him.

Very good for the men, though they need to make sure they pick those who are going to take it seriously. It gave him confidence and a really good way of seeing to the other end of a dark tunnel. Both the Family Day and the FAP day were really good.

It's generally very good for them all, especially those with partners and children, but that support needs to continue and follow through to release after that.

*I found it very good both for the men and their families. It gave me more knowledge and made me think. I realized that things were not so black and white. Also, **he** has realised there are things he can do, employment and training-wise. We **both** know more now **and** our communication is fantastic. It's all to the benefit of the children too, but carrying it through after release is what will be hard. More courses like this would really help us to do that.*

Every one of these relatives' final comments about the programme and/or the FAP was positive, though some comments contained understandable suggestions about programme selection, extension and anxieties as to whether all the identified plans and good intentions could really be implemented on release.

4.4 In summary

The FAP is an innovative concept which Safe Ground has developed in order to involve relatives in the *Family Man* programme in a structured way, to encourage progression and implementation of learning on the prisoner's release. This is a project which Safe Ground has approached in partnership with other relevant agencies, with whom it is engaging in strategic planning for the next 2 years. As the findings in this section from prisoners, and their relatives in particular show, while improvements can always be made, the FAP is an enjoyable and meaningful exercise, which engages families and makes them feel part of the prisoner's learning experience. Internal evaluation processes are in place, with plans being developed for a full external evaluation of overall effectiveness. Safe Ground is therefore making a significant contribution to the implementation process by bringing together prisoners, their relatives and key

agencies who themselves will have to follow the action plans through. A full evaluation will discover how successful their contribution has been.

5. The views of policy-makers and other key national ‘players’ about ongoing developments in Safe Ground’s work

Twelve national ‘players’ in both statutory and voluntary fields of prisons, prisoners, their families and family learning were invited to comment on the ongoing developments in Safe Ground’s work. This was for the purpose of obtaining a flavour of how well the programmes and their outcomes are known and understood by those who may commission and in other ways, support and underpin their development within national policy and strategy. Of the twelve people approached, eleven responded by questionnaire or telephone interview (according to their convenience) by the research deadline. They have all kindly agreed to be named, though not to have comments attributed to them.

They are: Mitch Egan, Regional Offender Manager (North Eastern Region); Lucy Gampell, Director, Action for Prisoners’ Families (APF); Andy Keen-Downes, Director, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT); Matthew Kelly, Deputy Regional Offender Manager with Patrick Morris, Performance Monitor (Eastern Region); Merron Mitchell, Director of Offender Learning, Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS); Keith Munns, recently retired Prison Service Area Manager (London); Steve Murphy, Regional Offender Manager (London); Fiona Nzegwu, Senior Policy Advisor, Families Unit, Dept. for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, formerly DfES); Sue O’Hara, Offender Learning Director, Learning and Skills Council; and Phil Wheatley, Director General, Prison Service.

5.1 Knowledge of Safe Ground and its programmes

All members of this group knew of Safe Ground and its programmes, most through face-to-face meetings with Safe Ground staff. These had either been meetings for specific planning/funding purposes, or Children and Families Pathway forums, or encounters at prison programme sites, or at one of the 3 Safe Ground Network Symposia which have been convened over the last 3 years. Nine people had attended at least one of these Symposia. When asked whether or not they had come away with the impression that Safe Ground is seeking to progress programme graduates’ learning to other appropriate prison-based educational opportunities, all 9 replied ‘Yes’. One respondent specifically added the observation that ‘signposting is part of the Safe Ground experience.’ When asked whether or not they perceived this progression as extending to longer-term implementation on release, 8 of the 9 replied ‘yes’, but two with the caveat

that the intent was there but the specific contribution required clearer articulation. The 9th respondent had been unable to form a view about this question, considering that the actual evidence for it would lie in the hands of provider organizations. The two people who had not attended a Symposium were asked how they would normally inform themselves about the content and quality of these kinds of programmes. One respondent did not answer; the other cited advice from policy staff, direct feedback from governing Governors and advice from the DfES (now DCSF). In general, therefore, it appeared that Safe Ground's policy of seeking to progress its programme graduates towards further learning and implementation both within and beyond the prison is known and understood by almost all members of this national group, with a minority advocating the need for more evidence and articulation.

5.2 Links with OASys

The 2005-6 Review highlighted the concern of policy-makers that Safe Ground programmes should become more clearly linked in to the Offender Assessment System (OASys) and Sentence Planning processes within prisons. Five members of this national group considered that the link is now being made. Of the other 6, two felt they could not claim to know one way or the other, and 4 were aware that Safe Ground claims that the process is happening, but had not themselves seen evidence for it. However, 2 respondents who did consider that the link was being made pointed out that it is difficult to know what happens to the information *after* it has been fed by the programme staff into OASys, and one was unconvinced that OASys, in any event, affords proper attention to family issues:

I am aware that they are doing this, but I don't know what happens when the information goes into the OASys system and is beyond the remit of Safe Ground staff.

I don't feel that OASys pays enough attention to family issues, which makes it difficult for the Safe Ground work to contribute effectively. For example, family/relationship issues only form part of the Sentence Plan when a prisoner's relationship is seen to be at risk; where there is a stable relationship and he is anticipating receiving visits, OASys does nothing. I would be interested to know how many EM/FI participants fall into this category. My guess is that most will be in a relationship that would not be deemed to be at risk via OASys.

Overall then, just under half of these respondents believed that Safe Ground programmes are now linking more clearly to OASys, slightly more than half would like to see more evidence of this, and there is a minority concern as to what happens to the information after it is fed in and whether these

contributions can be effective in practice if a prisoner's family relationships are not seen to be at risk.

5.3 Perceived benefits of the *Family Man* and *Fathers Inside* programmes

The respondents were asked what they saw as being the benefits, if any, of the *Family Man* and *Fathers Inside* programmes to prisoners, their families, the prison itself and the wider society. Unsurprisingly, this brought a range of responses which broadly encompassed: prisoner skills, knowledge, qualifications, confidence and taking family responsibility; families feeling engaged with and heard; more responsible and responsive prisoners, contributing to prison stability; within the wider society, better relationships with children and partners, contributing to less re-offending (though most respondents acknowledged the need to prove this last). One contributor on the latter topic also pointed to the economic benefits to society:

Ultimately, we're all interested in reducing re-offending, as it produces less damage and less victims. If these programmes enable prisoners to return to their families, we know from the Home Office Resettlement Survey [Niven and Stewart, 2005] that families offer the best support for ETE (education, training and employment) and accommodation on release and these are critical factors in reducing re-offending. Even for those who have no family to go to on release, some opportunity for reflection and greater self-awareness can only be healthy and beneficial to future behaviour. It's all about social capital. Even the IMF look at this now when examining local communities, because they know that social capital strengthens economies.

Thus, there appeared little doubt in most respondents' minds that benefits did accrue to all 4 categories, though one respondent would again have preferred more evidence in relation to benefits both for prisoners and the wider society:

***Benefits for prisoners:** this exercises me a little. I have evidence that prisoners feel good about the course. But I struggle to see where the evidence base is in terms of effectiveness on a prisoner's life. But then, in general, those courses which refresh prisoners' relationships with their families don't have much evidence. If there was evidence such as improved relationships through visits, this could constitute a proxy measure.*

***Benefits for the wider society:** it's difficult to know, but if you think of the prominence of reality shows today and someone like Dr. Tanya Byron (a Clinical Psychologist who has just been appointed the new Children's Tsar) who hosts some of them, it shows that the Government is highlighting the*

*importance of family relationships in society, even though on flimsy evidence. So **this** kind of work is seen as acceptable. But, you have to ask: how do we know that what we **think** is doing good **is** doing good?*

Although these two caveats were articulated by only one person, they do illustrate a general theme within this survey about the need for further evidence about impacts and outcomes.

5.4 Addressing key contextual policy strands

The members of this national group were next asked whether, in their opinion, the Safe Ground programmes addressed the following 3 key contextual policy strands: the ‘Every Child Matters’ Outcomes Framework; the Children and Families Pathway to reducing re-offending; and the Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Pathway to reducing re-offending. **Table 6** below denotes their initial ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answers.

Table 6: View of national ‘players’ as to whether key policy strands are addressed by the Safe Ground programmes (N = 11)			
POLICY STRAND	ADDRESSED BY SAFE GROUND PROGRAMMES		
	YES	NO	UNSURE
‘Every Child Matters’ Outcomes Framework	5	2	4
Children and Families Pathway	9	-	2
ETE Pathway	7	1	3

Table 6 above shows that most members of the national group believed that the Safe Ground programmes are contributing to the Children and Families Pathway to reducing re-offending. One commentator added:

Safe Ground is not a major programme provider in this region, but it is well-liked and warmly favoured by our multi-agency Pathway group, who see it as fitting well into the Children and Families Pathway agenda.

Seven out of the total of eleven believed that the programmes also contribute to the ETE Pathway, while less than half believed this to apply to the ‘Every Child Matters’ Outcomes Framework. In respect of this last, just two respondents were clear that it was not being addressed, both of them on the basis that Safe Ground does not work sufficiently directly with children. The person who believed the ETE Pathway was not being addressed did not offer an explanation. Where uncertainty was expressed as to whether any of these policy strands were being

addressed, this was usually due to unfamiliarity with one or more policies, or to lack of evidence. Some of the responses to this question also came with broader comments about the policy context for these programmes:

The Children and Families Pathway is a piece of Government rhetoric, which currently has no substance

In theory it addresses ETE, but probably not in the way that ETE is currently envisaged, because these programmes deliberately avoid an academic approach, feeding in to ETE more as a foundation with a strong focus on family. The trouble is that these Pathways create a whole bunch of new silos, although the Government's original idea was to get away from these!

It's hard to draw together the needs of family, education and prison. It's a challenge, but we're all working at it!

These comments, perhaps, serve to illustrate the difficulty for Safe Ground of satisfying the requirements of a multi-faceted policy context. Given the 'challenge' referred to above, it appears to be performing relatively well in the view of these national 'players'.

5.5 Wider prison and mainstream service support of programme learning

In recognition of the complexity of working across services, further highlighted in the responses to the previous question, these respondents were asked an open-ended question about the ways in which they thought the implementation of learning from the programmes should be supported by the wider prison and mainstream services. Two people did not answer this question, perhaps relating to lack of familiarity with the prison system. The responses of the other 9 are reproduced in full below.

Integrated learning through a well-thought out structured programme for the offender, ensuring that the needs of the offender are dealt with, would always be the best option for any development course. Courses run in isolation with no consideration to past and future activities would be less positive

Has be part of a targeted approach led within the offender management process – otherwise it will be marginal

There should be scope for continued dissemination of best practice and lessons learned from the ongoing initiatives

The course could be transferred into OLASS Community work and mainstream FE work

OLASS lead providers already support the programme where it is appropriate for the learners

Successful graduates could be given priority on future training/work within and outside the prison

From the individual offender's point of view, the learning should feed into subsequent assessments and sentence plans as a matter of course, through offender managers (where they are appointed to a case) or personal officers so that future needs can be planned for and a sequenced programme can be effected

By having an environment in which these things work best - obviously not so grossly overcrowded and constrained

Prison treatment only works well if it is reinforced across the whole regime and followed through outside on release. More can always be done in these areas

It will be seen that these responses range from the general to the specific in terms of how programme learning might be supported, but there is no disagreement that this underpinning needs to take place. It is clear, then, that the longer-term effectiveness of the Safe Ground programmes depends on a range of others playing their systemic part.

5.6 Communication and information exchange

In order to gain a sense of Safe Ground's part in the ongoing development of effective communication and information exchange, referred to at **2.10** the national players were asked to rate along a scale of 1 - 5 (where 1 = very poorly and 5 = extremely well) three aspects of this development. (One respondent replied 'Not enough knowledge to comment'). The results are depicted in **Table 7** below:

Table 7: National players' rating of aspects of Safe Ground's communications with them (N = 10)						
SAFE GROUND'S ABILITY TO:	RATING SCALE: 1 = very poorly 5 = extremely well					
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Engage with involved bodies such as their own	-	-	2	6	2	-
Communicate to national 'players' the nature and purpose of its work	-	-	2	6	2	-
Communicate to national 'players' the effectiveness of its work	-	3	4	2	-	1

Table 7 shows that Safe Ground's qualities of engagement with them and ability to communicate to them the nature and purpose of its work are rated highly by this group of national players. Eight out of ten rate them at 4 or 5, the high end of the scale for both aspects of communication; two rate them at 3, the middle of the scale. In respect of Safe Ground's ability to communicate the effectiveness of its work (for example, through its graduation and progression data) the picture changes somewhat, with three respondents rating this at 2, the lower end of the scale, four in the middle at 3, and two at 4, the higher end. One respondent considered that this question was not applicable as Safe Ground would not have such a remit in respect of that person's role. However, the same person commented along similar lines to other accompanying responses to this question:

But they do use their communication opportunities extremely well. It's an organisational strength.

5.7 What makes Safe Ground different?

In the previous review, policy-makers noted the need for Safe Ground more closely to define its educative purpose and unique selling point (USP). During the course of the last year, it has clarified its educative purpose as and its USP as group and team work. These developments were set out during the House of Lords Symposium in March 2007. However, in order to discover the perceptions of the national 'players' about the USP, this group was asked what they thought Safe Ground does (if anything) that is different from the work of other related organisations. Two respondents did not answer this question. The other responses appear in full below:

The emphasis on drama and the intensity and depth of the course is unique. The way in which it links into Basic Skills is particularly important and unique, to my knowledge. However, the downside of this is that I do not feel that the course is appropriate in many prisons where they have a constant churn of prisoners and this will be increasingly a problem with the population pressures.

The Safe Ground programmes have been co-created with the Prison Service and they use the drama-based approach.

It seems to fit a gap in offering a structured course which addresses issues which are of concern to offenders.

Safe Ground is passionately committed to ensuring that offenders develop a positive and sustainable relationship with their families. The organisation and its workers have an in-depth understanding of the link between release into a stable environment and the likelihood of re-offending and are keen to act strategically to provide an holistic response to mitigate this risk.

Holistic approach to learner and learning. A course addressing offending behaviour (OB) but not an OB programme. The course is relevant, stimulating, stretching the physical, emotional and mental abilities and fun. The sense of achievement and recognition of progression from start of course to finish is considerable.

Demonstrates, often for the first time, that prisoners can take responsibility for their own actions and positively affect their futures.

Difficult to answer. There is no doubt that it offers value – to what extent is difficult to assess. I am interested enough to be looking at the evidence on visits to establishments. I will be speaking with FM/FI staff when I get the opportunity, but as yet have been unable to do so in my region.

They're very competent self-publicists! This is not a criticism. They have a real skill there that they ought to be proud of. We have far more work being delivered by 'X' (a similar organisation) whose quality is good, but I'm much more likely to hear about the work of Safe Ground!

The USP seems to be the link to broader learning/ETE outcomes, rather than being self-standing.

This range of answers is not easy to categorise, but it can be seen that the themes of drama-based learning and attention to learning progression are prominent. Other points of 'difference' highlight the link to Basic Skills, the partnership with the Prison Service, the 'passionate commitment' to families and stable resettlement, the holistic approach to learners and learning, the demonstration that prisoners can take responsibility, and the skill of publicising the

organisation's achievements. The small number of reservations expressed relate, again, to the need for further evidence and to the drawback of the high turnover of prisoners at some prisons, which can affect feasible delivery of programmes like these. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the committed, holistic drama-based, progression and resettlement focused approach to prisoner learning is what stands out for these national respondents.

5.8 Gaining hard outcome evidence

The need to obtain hard outcome evidence was identified in the last review and has been pressed for by Safe Ground with relevant bodies as recommended in that document. The group of national 'players' was asked what needed to be done to gain such evidence, following interventions from Safe Ground programmes and others like them. Their range of answers appears below:

I think there should be a control group study of 'like-minded' prisoners that follows them from the start of the course to at least 6 months afterwards (including, most importantly post-release) to try to see whether it really does make a difference to prisoners and their families. Given that this is likely not to happen, I would like to see follow-up interviews conducted with the prisoner, his partner and children (if possible) to see whether it has made a difference.

Investment in longer-term research at least 2 years post-release. More than simply checking the PNC [Police National Computer] or Probation – one needs to look at whether they are offending less, or less seriously. Should also involve families – there's a case for qualitative as well as quantitative outcomes. Need to look at predictive factors for reoffending – we do know there's a probability curve for when people are most likely to reoffend and can relate the research to this.

Better/more consistent data capture from the outcomes and a clear framework as to what is being looked for in the data.

Needs to be linked into mainstream offender management processes. We are interested in setting up an evaluation arrangement – but some careful design work for the evaluation/accreditation arrangements will be required – certainly not easy to show any causal link with reduced re-offending. Therefore sub measure around offender engagement, improved engagement with services, quality of family relationships, increase in 'soft skills' etc. need to be established.

Follow-on impact data should be collated and disseminated to government. and relevant officials.

A funded research programme, carried out by a recognisably able organisation, which will prove the benefits to potential funders. Perhaps more easily said than done

Factual data

Anecdotal evidence from all parties involved

Buy in from Governor, ROM, LSC, provider, Learner

Clarity of role for those involved

Clear route for absorbing FM/FI into prison regime of OLASS provision with realistic staff provision, learner accessibility and cost

Clear ownership of programme (currently too fragmented – many differing deliveries – not possible under OLASS).

As with all corrections interventions, we need to see payoffs in reduced reoffending and ideally in ETE outcomes and family cohesion too. This is not easy, especially as other interventions are often taking place at the same time which may also have a beneficial effect. Start and end of programme evidence is valuable inasmuch as it gives a sense of the intrinsic quality of the programme and short-term learning, but we need to see longer-term benefits too. OASys should be able to offer some of this in due course.

Learner follow-up, systematically produced and analysed – and independent evaluation.

Ideally the work needs in-depth research of a large sample followed up for at least 2 years after release to see what the outcomes are for the individual and their families and what the effect is on reconviction rates.

This is really close to my heart! It's worth them talking to specialists about what they need to capture. I recently saw some anecdotal evidence from 'Y' [a related organization] that made it absolutely acceptable to the casual reader. You have to have the capacity to adopt the clothing of the arm of the world you want to convince and present it in public sector-speak – e.g. accreditation panel language

The sort of evidence they need is, for example, a before and after descriptor of the relationships between prisoner and children/family in family home; prisoner and staff; attitudes and thinking; institutional behaviour; nature and degree of routine contact between prisoner and family; degree of financial responsibility. When you are commissioning, most things look good and I can only commission one tenth of them. SG comes near the bottom in terms of evidence. I'd really like more evidence of change, and I get a fair bit of this from the well-established accredited programmes, but it's hard for the voluntary sector to do it. The correctional services panel is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. There are other accreditation mechanisms. Can academic qualifications be attached to these courses to help distinguish them from Life and Social Skills and link them to criminogenic need? Could this be done through the LSC?

In respect of re-offending rates, in 03-04 there was a country-wide reduction in re-offending. If you asked 10 people to explain why, you would get 10 different answers. Re-offending is reducing anyway, so courses will show it in any event. We have to work in volumes – what works for the biggest number is what we have to do. No-one can tell you. David Farrington's longitudinal work [see Farrington et al., 2006] comes nearest. RDS produced some recent work on jobs and accommodation being a good indicator of resettlement success, but we invest nothing in providing accommodation and work.

Although these responses cover a number of issues, it is clear, firstly, that all respondents believe in the importance of hard outcome evidence, and that the majority would like to gain evidence from at least a two-year follow-up study. For most, this would encompass re-offending rates, as well as other family and resettlement-related measures, although one respondent cautioned against making any simple causal deductions from these. Softer 'before and after programme' measures of change were also seen by some as making a useful contribution to the determination of outcome, though clearly such findings would be limited by their short-term nature. Overall, however, there is a clear drive for outcome information and no 'Pathway to Reducing Re-offending' can be said to have been wholly effective without being able to produce this.

5.9 Open-ended comments about Safe Ground

Finally, the national 'players' were asked if they wished to make any other comments about their experience of Safe Ground. This produced a mixture of suggestions and plaudits from the 3 respondents who chose to answer.

The programmes attend to an important part of the prisoner's experience which has been neglected in the past. What I have seen of the Wandsworth programme gives me confidence that it is well structured, well run and engages prisoners positively. Whether it also provides long-term payoffs at a reasonable cost is less easy to evidence – and indeed whether other approaches in the same territory are or less effective.

The reason we decided to get involved is that it offers great potential for a whole family approach and it's only through those kinds of partnerships and alliances that we're likely to reach the outcomes we want. Bringing together learning and skills, parenting and relationship programmes, a child-centred approach which does look at ECM, needs of parents and carers in the community. We are pleased to be involved in the project on that basis.

I think the commitment and energy that SG has shown to this work is extraordinary and they have made a significant contribution to parenting

education in prison and to raising awareness of family issues. By working with prison staff they have helped to break down some of the internal barriers and prejudices that so often hinder good work. I am pleased that SG are now working on a project involving partners and children more, but would like to have seen this happen earlier and more routinely within the programmes.

These commentators are choosing to highlight the structured and committed way in which Safe Ground has integrated its programmes into the prison system and also its willingness to keep moving and developing to fill previously identified gaps such as involving children and families in prisoner education.

5.10 In summary

Safe Ground's policy of moving its graduates towards progression and implementation of learning is known by almost all the national 'players' contributing to this Review. About half believe the **FM/FI** programmes are linking in more clearly to OASys; others pointed to their dependency on other professionals to make this work effectively. There is a general view that the programmes provide a range of benefits to prisoners, families, prisons and the wider society. In terms of related policy, most respondents consider that the 2 most relevant Pathways to Reducing Reoffending are addressed by the programmes. There is less certainty about the 'Every Child Matters' Outcomes Framework, though two of the comments in the paragraph above show that there is a perception that Safe Ground is now moving towards this agenda. Most respondents highlighted ways in which the **FM/FI** programmes differed from other programmes on similar topics; it was the committed, holistic, drama-based, progression and resettlement focused approach which stood out overall. However, a recurring thread in these national 'players' answers was the need for more outcome evidence, both 'soft' and 'hard', and respondents made a number of suggestions about this, which will be addressed in the next section.

6. Summary and implications of the 2006-7 review

The purpose of this review has been to examine the progress made by Safe Ground in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 - 6 Review (Boswell, 2006). This section reiterates the specific questions being asked and summarises the answers and implications to be drawn from the foregoing sections.

6.1 The policy context: *The present review will examine the views of national 'players', who have to work to these policy agendas, as to whether Safe Ground's work continues to address them.* Findings from this respondent group suggested that most consider that the Children and Families and ETE Pathways to Reducing Reoffending continue to be addressed by the FM/FI programmes. There is less certainty as to whether the programmes address the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) Outcomes Framework, though there is some perception that they are now moving towards this agenda. Over the last year, Safe Ground's work with PACT to initiate and pilot the FAP at HMP Wandsworth shows that it has the ECM Outcomes Framework in its sights by, in accordance with research findings, seeking to strengthen adult relationships as a preliminary underpinning of work which might be done, perhaps in partnership with other child-focused agencies, further down the line. Overall, therefore, Safe Ground is operating appropriately within the surrounding and often quite complex policy context and should continue to hold and develop its focus in this arena.

6.2 Progression and implementation evidence: *The need for further outcome research was identified for both these processes and the present review elicits national 'players' views on this.* It was clear that Safe Ground's policy of seeking to progress its programme graduates towards further learning and implementation both within and beyond the prison was known and understood by almost all members of this national group. Although the organisation's ability to engage and communicate its nature and purpose was rated very highly by these respondents, its ability to communicate its effectiveness to them was seen as less well developed. In respect of progression, this is likely to be a function of Safe Ground's need to develop and refine further its data collection and analysis skills in order to gain the necessary confidence to communicate this evidence, and also to identify the system or route most likely to reach those who need to be convinced of its effectiveness. In respect of implementation, over the last year, Safe Ground has begun to gain feedback within its pilot project from prisoner graduates, some of them after release, and from relatives involved in the FAP. It should continue this internal monitoring and evaluation culture but, for wider credibility, and beyond this review process, there is no doubt that external outcome research is required and that external resources would be needed to support it. In this respect, Safe Ground's discussions with DCSF, NOMS and other potential research-funding bodies should be continued.

6.3 Data collection: *The need to inculcate the data collection practice was noted as being critical and, in addition to the most recent programme data being presented herein, Safe Ground staff have been interviewed about their contribution to the potential improvement of this process.* Over the last year, Safe Ground staff have worked hard through the **Network** to introduce innovative methods of training, and otherwise encourage prison-based programme staff to collect and feed in their data to the centre, particularly by emphasizing the reasons why they should do so. They have piloted new data categories, including rates of post-programme enhanced status/adjudication/OASys experience. At a symposium, prison managers were also provided with one prison's data on recruitment, retention and progression routes, as well as on the new data categories, and invited to draw on this to consider potential improvements they could make to programming and managing **FM/FI** in their establishments. Despite these innovations, alongside disproportionate amounts of Safe Ground staff's time being devoted to trying to elicit data from prison personnel, the data for 2006 - 7 still remain incomplete and a similar pattern appears to be looming for 2007 - 8. As with some other facets of its work, Safe Ground does not have the resources to do other people's jobs in addition to its own. On this basis, it should continue to develop and further test its innovations, especially via its planned programme of strategy tours to prisons to develop best practice across the **Network**. As some of its staff and some national 'players' suggest, it should consider the advantages and disadvantages of accreditation, one of the former being that prison staff would have to return their monitoring figures. Staff also need some expertise brought in to their data management systems and thought is needed as to how best to accomplish this.

6.4 Feeding programme data into OASys: *Safe Ground staff and the national 'players' are interviewed here about the extent to which relevant information is now being fed into OASys.* The observations in respect of **6.3** clearly also apply here. However, interviews with the national 'player' respondents suggested mixed perceptions of the extent to which monitoring data and other relevant information is now being fed into OASys, several being aware that the success of this process was dependant on other personnel and other factors. On the pilot project where some effort was being put in by Safe Ground and other staff to further this process, only around 50% of prisoners were being linked to OASys. Safe Ground also seconded a member of its staff to the Offending Behaviour Programmes Unit to learn more about the way in which this is intended to operate within the accredited programme arrangements. This learning process needs to continue as the system itself develops and Safe Ground extends its pilot work to other prisons.

6.5 The need for networking: *Safe Ground has much expertise, particularly in its communication strengths, to offer to the continuing development of the networking process, and the views of their staff and the national 'players' are again elicited here about the ways in which this is developing.* It is clear from the national respondents that Safe Ground's communication skills via symposia and the **Network** continue to be seen as one of its greatest strengths. Staff's 'passionate commitment' to their work is also cited and there is general awareness that these qualities are not just self-standing but purposefully linked to their holistic approach to prisoner learners and learning, to families and stable resettlement, and to the demonstration that prisoners can take responsibility for this. Through their innovative training and pilot work over the last year, Safe Ground staff have shown that they do not allow their expertise to stand still, and this is an approach that will undoubtedly permeate their continuing networking endeavours.

6.6 Developing the Safe Ground Network Symposia: *The present review examines this process in relation to the most recent networking and symposia activities, to see whether the pattern of meeting user-need has continued.* User-feedback from earlier symposia showed that they were greatly valued by Tutors, Heads of Learning, policy-makers and related agencies alike for the information-sharing and idea-generating they provided. However, a criticism was that it was in some ways too ambitious to try to meet the needs of all these groups at one time and that some events should be held for specific sets of personnel. Over the last year, Safe Ground has continued its *modus operandi* of modelling sound adult learning principles by listening to what people are saying they need and to provide for it on the next occasion. This has been demonstrated in the strategic development of the **Network** in the last 12 months, in the symposium specifically for prison managers and policy-makers on programming and management, and in the discrete work with Tutors on recruitment, collecting and using data, progression routes, the FAP and links with OASys. This pattern of event-planning works well and appears very likely to continue.

6.7 Research and feedback from prisoners and families: *Since last year's review, Safe Ground has made its own response to the challenge of engaging with families, by piloting a Family Action Plan (FAP) at Wandsworth Prison and the present review sought interview feedback from prisoners, their participating relatives and the Safe Ground FAP Manager about the process and effectiveness of this innovation.* The FAP is an innovative concept in partnership with agencies and families. Prisoner and relative research feedback have shown it to be developing extremely successfully in its pilot phase, as an enjoyable and meaningful exercise which engages families and makes them feel part of the prisoner's learning experience. This work should clearly continue to be tested and further developed in other prisons running the **FM/FI** programmes, with a view to full evaluation of its effectiveness.

6.8 Safe Ground's educative purpose and unique selling point (USP): *The national 'players' and Safe Ground staff were interviewed to find out how far these have now been identified.* Safe Ground has identified clearly in the last year that its educative purpose is group and teamwork. In terms of its USP, most national 'players' responses suggested that the drama-based holistic approach to learning, and attention to learning progression, are key factors in making Safe Ground different from other prison-based programmes on related topics. These distinctions now appear to have been lucidly made.

6.9 Reliable information exchange: *Safe Ground staff and the national 'players' were asked for their perceptions of this kind of exchange over the last 12 months.* As observed earlier, Safe Ground is widely perceived to possess very accomplished communication skills, but a pervading call from national 'players' was for them to communicate evidence of effectiveness, and there is still much work for Safe Ground and related others to do in this field. The staff themselves have conveyed the difficulty of doing this when others do not always play their part, and of trying to do a professional job in the face of occasionally feeling they are treated as 'a squiffy little charity'. Nevertheless, Safe Ground's status as a small charity, and its tenacious 'can-do' ethos, are also the strengths that enable it to persevere with a pioneering approach to engagement with decision-makers in a way that the statutory sector is less free to do. Obtaining the right categories of information to communicate is likely to render it more 'heard' during such engagement. National 'players' have indicated that both 'soft' before-and-after programme evidence of behaviour change, proxy measures such as improved relationships through visits, and 'hard' longer-term evidence around resettlement and re-offending outcomes are what is needed now. Safe Ground needs first to get its own data collection and management house in order and then to set out on this more challenging research-based road. To this end it has already sought the advice of a psychology academic about measuring behaviour change.

6.10 The overall conclusion of the 2005-6 Review: *The present review will take all the evidence together to assess what progress has been made in implementing these recommendations.* The evidence has been set out and summarized here in terms of the documentary and programme data and Safe Ground staff interviews in Section 3; the prisoner, relative and FAP Manager interview data relating to the Family Action Plan in Section 4; and the national 'players' interview data in Section 5. It leads to the following conclusion.

7. Conclusion

Safe Ground is committed to a journey of self-improvement, parallel to that on which it helps its prisoner students to set out. This is demonstrated in its consistent prioritization of the research and review process within its programme of work. As the foregoing report shows, there is no area of development identified by the 2005 - 6 Review that staff have not looked closely at and formed an associated plan of action about. Some of these actions, like the FAP pilot, the refinement of the FM programme at HMP Wandsworth as a demonstration model, the **Network**, symposia and strategic training activity have been pro-active, innovative and indicative of the spreading of good practice within and beyond the organization. As one staff member reported being told at policy level, Safe Ground is 'ahead of the game' and in the unenviable position of having to wait for others to catch up. A major drawback in this respect is the organisation's dependence on other key agencies and personnel, to complete what it has started. There are other actions it can and should take, such as bringing in expertise to its data management system, which should also enable it more confidently to mobilise and publicise this data to best advantage. But it cannot then force others to act, and so needs to concentrate its energies on eliciting the information that those responsible for commissioning and managing programmes actually want to see - and perhaps, as one of them suggested, to draw on its strong communication and drama skills to adopt the language of the sector it is seeking to convince.

Since the 2005 - 6 Review, the external call for longer-term programme outcome evidence has grown louder. This begs a number of interim questions which are likely to be beyond Safe Ground's capacity or remit to answer, but which they and relevant others could be thinking about:

- What is the role of the wider prison community in seeking to foster and sustain family relationships and learning after programmes?
- In the absence of a fully operational OASys and offender management system, how can prisons help to track resettlement data for those who have undertaken programmes?
- How can prisoner students make the most of their newly acquired knowledge to engage not only with their own resettlement plans but also to prevent the possible later offending of their children who, as a category, are statistically at risk in this respect (Farrington *et al.*, 2006)?
- How can research be accurately and effectively programmed to yield harder evidence about the combination of provision needed to stabilize family relationships and reduce parental (and next generation) offending?

The last major finding of the 2005 - 6 Review was that Safe Ground should press for hard research evidence about reconviction rates which will enable it to assess its longer-term effectiveness. This report has shown that it has begun such conversations with DCFS and NOMS RDS but also that there is some scepticism at national 'player' level as to whether reconviction rates are a meaningful measure of change. Here, it is important to note, first, that longitudinal quantitative data about reconviction rates are more possible to obtain than is often suggested and, second, that such data should be set alongside longitudinal qualitative surveys of ex-prisoners, partners, carers and children, both to measure behaviour change, and to find out what **they** considered made the difference between ex-prisoners either re-offending or not re-offending. Although control groups for this kind of research are challenging to obtain, they are not impossible, and with careful planning and resourcing, a coherent study could be embarked upon, say over 3-5 years with both interim and final stages of follow-up data. In this way, some reliable answers could be elicited on the question of whether parenting and family relationship programmes such as the kind delivered by Safe Ground actually **do** serve to improve family relationships and reduce re-offending in the long term. In the meantime, some very significant progress has been made in terms of the development of Safe Ground's work over the last year. This Review fittingly ends with a quotation from an **FM** graduate, 2 years after completing the programme. It typifies the attitude to continuing learning, and the appreciation of the programme and its staff, of two thirds of graduates who took the trouble to send their replies to the **FM** Manager:

I'm still studying for my Business degree and also about 10 months ago I paid to do a Sports Psychology Diploma. It's hard work doing two such demanding courses, but it keeps my brain active. And to be honest, it's down to you partly that I started these courses, as I remember your words to me about using my brain in such a way. Thank you.

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Table 5: Post-programme progression numbers and types April 2003 – March 2007

Table 6: View of national ‘players’ as to whether key policy strands are addressed by the Safe Ground programmes

Table 7: National players’ rating of aspects of Safe Ground’s communications with them

Appendix 1

List of establishments and programmes in Safe Ground's 'Fathers Inside' and 'Family Man' Network

ESTABLISHMENT	NUMBER OF PROGRAMMES RUN APRIL 2006 - AUGUST 2007
HMP Acklington	2 (New)
HMP Aylesbury	2 (New)
HMP Belmarsh	7
HMP Birmingham	5
HMP Blakenhurst	1 (New)
HMP Bristol	3 (New)
HMP& R/C Cardiff	4
HMP Channings Wood	8
HMP & YOI Chelmsford	3
HMYOI Deerbolt	2
HMP Durham	1 (New)
HMP Exeter	6
HMP Frankland	1
HMP & YOI Guy's Marsh	2
HMP Leeds	3
HMP & YOI Lewes	2
HMP Lowdham Grange	2
HMP The Mount	4
HMYOI & R/C Onley	5
HMYOI Rochester	3
HMP Stafford	1
HMYOI Swinfen Hall	3
HMP Wandsworth	8
HMP Winchester	2
TOTAL PRISONS 24	TOTAL PROGS. 73
Key: R/C = Remand Centre YOI = Young Offender Institution	

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