

## **The benefits of Family Man**

Written by Lee in HMP Belmarsh

Hello, my name is Lee and I am currently in Belmarsh prison where I did the Family Man course and I also mentored on the following one.

When I first heard about the Family Man course through my friend who said how good it was, I have to say that I was sceptical. But I can honestly say that after 13 years in prison and the many courses I have done, Family Man is by far the best I have come across.

It can help you break down so many barriers and look at things from your family perspective and what they're going through, as I always think of my victim and his family and the hurt I must of caused but I never really realised that my own family are victims too and Family Man helped me to see that.

Family Man also helped me to build bridges with my family by the regular letters we write in the course about what we've been doing and the one day workshop that gives you the chance to work with your supporter and put some of what you've learnt into practice and it gives them hope for the future as they can see the change and the effort you're putting in

When you first walk into the Family Man class, it's a bit daunting as you have 20 odd men, most of whom don't know each other, all full of bravado and not wanting to show weakness because of where we are, but you quickly drop the act. You learn to trust each other and a lot of that comes from the tutor's Clive and Glenn who have got great personalities and really build a rapport with the students, and I believe a lot of the success of the course is down to them as they bring everyone together as one.

Family Man made me have a long hard look at myself and showed me how selfish I was and never even knew it. For example whenever I got on the phone it was always about me and how hard I've got it, I never listened or thought about them or their problems. But after doing Family Man, that's the first thing I ask when I'm on the phone; how's your day been, any problems etc. Family Man taught me that even though I'm in jail I can still be there for them. It made me look at my behaviour and how it affects them and the impact it has on their lives. My communication has improved 100% since the course and we now talk openly about our problems rather than just getting on with it – as after helping me through this course it has helped them to understand me better and vice versa.

The course also built up my confidence and gave me an action plan for the future. Since I finished a year ago I've gone to apply for a open university course and got involved with various agencies to do with youth work. All this was done with the information and guidance I got from the FM course.

Family Man is a unique course and I would recommend it to anyone – you have nothing to lose but everything to gain.