

Cross-Party Group
Children and Families Affected by Imprisonment
& AGM

Wednesday 2nd March 2016

1-2pm

Attendance: Nancy Loucks, Gael Cochrane, Debi Harris, Nicole Edwards, Cheryl Paris, Susan Bulloch, Dinah Aitken, Nicki Wray, Lexi Smart, Margaret Slater, Jude Clarke, Emma Youens, Marie Cairns, Helen McClymont, Tim Parkinson, Justina Murray, Susan Cross, Dermot Dooley, Hannah Graham, Mike Nellis, Lisa MacKenzie, Georgina Lyttle, Valerie MacNiven, Tim Haines, Hazel Anderson, Sarah McHardy, Sophie Jones, Rebecca Joyce

Apologies: Sara Watkin, Anne Pinkman, Ann-Marie Burns, Janice McGowan, Billie Wealleans, Paul Gilroy, Laura Scofield, Sue Maxwell, Nicola McCloskey, Viv Dickenson

Welcome and apologies	Action
Ms Fee MSP welcomed those in attendance, and apologies were noted.	
Election of office bearers	
In accordance with the terms of Cross-Party Groups for the Scottish Parliament, the election of office bearers was held. Ms Fee was re-elected as Convenor of the Cross Party Group, Ms Margaret McDougal and Mr Richard Lye were re-elected as Vice Convenors, and Nancy Loucks was re-elected as Secretariat.	
Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Action
The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Anyone who did not receive the attachment (Police Scotland's powerpoint presentation) from the last minutes should contact Rebecca Joyce or Nancy Loucks.	
Update on Parliamentary Business	Action
<p>Mary received a letter regarding a Community Justice Authority report relating to Mary's amendment. Peter McNamara congratulated the CPG on the work they did towards getting the amendment lodged and successfully passed.</p> <p>Mary has proposed that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be incorporated in Scots Law. She has received widespread support for this, including support from children's organisations.</p>	Mary will keep the group updated on any progress.

Electronic Monitoring: The Impact for Families	Action
<p data-bbox="188 300 1021 336"><u>Delphine Vanhaelemeesch, Department of Penal Law, Belgium</u></p> <ul data-bbox="239 380 1133 1948" style="list-style-type: none"> • Delphine’s PhD compared the use of Electronic Monitoring to imprisonment, including the experiences had by families who were directly affected by a relative being monitored electronically. • Delphine noted that there is more research available on imprisonment than electronic monitoring, and more from the offender’s perspective than that of the family member. • The aim of Delphine’s study was to look how offenders and their families found their experiences of electronic monitoring, and how this experience differed from their experiences of imprisonment. • Delphine noted that people who are electronically monitored tend to live with others, thus why the experiences of families affected by electronic monitoring are important to consider. • Delphine’s research was comprised of 60 interviews with prisoners, 30 interviews with recalled prisoners, 30 interviews with ‘co-residents’ (generally families of the person who is electronically monitored). • The research concluded that the experience of EM is unique and complex for individuals, and some individuals preferred prison to being electronically monitored in the community because of their home environment. • Family members felt that they were being punished indirectly, but after a period of readjustment the positive aspects of EM outweighed the negatives. • Anxiety was commonly reported by family members. • Families reported that their daily routines and social lives were affected by EM – many felt guilty about attending social events which fell during curfew hours, and so stopped attending such activities altogether to stay at home with their family member. • Families reported feeling like a “social worker” who was compliant in assisting with their loved one’s monitoring – they felt responsible for ensuring their loved one refrained from consuming alcohol, arrived home in enough time etc. • Families felt that the needs of the offender were more important than their own needs • Family members felt responsible for carrying out the everyday tasks on their own – shopping, taking the children to their appointments etc. – as they did not want to dictate how the offender spent their ‘free time’ (out with curfew hours). 	

Mike Nellis, University of Strathclyde

- Mike Nellis provided an overview of Electronic Monitoring in Scotland.
- The maximum length which someone can be monitored electronically in Scotland is 12 months, although an individual on parole may be monitored for longer.
- Generally, individuals feel that EM was a better overall experience than imprisonment, although EM is still stressful.
- Offenders reported that prison has fewer responsibilities than being in the community under electronic monitoring, with it being easier to know where you stand in terms of rules and restrictions.
- The advantages of EM reported include not having to attend visits at the prison and mutual support being available between the offender and their family member.
- Mike feels that viewing EM as solely for punishment purposes has a negative impact on both the offender and their family – instead, it should be considered that electronic monitoring play more of a supportive role in helping offenders to organise and structure their lives.
- Mike noted that there are big differences between the use of electronic monitoring in Belgium and Scotland. In Belgium, Social Workers are always involved in supporting offenders that are being electronically monitored.
- Mike proposes that EM is viewed as a supportive tool which takes an integrated approach to monitoring and supporting individuals to avoid reoffending.

Hannah Graham, University of Stirling

- Hannah reiterated Delphine’s findings that that families of offenders being electronically monitored feel as though they are “co-administering” the punishment.
- Hannah’s findings suggest that family members should have to provide consent in addition to the home assessment before having their loved one return to the home under EM.
- Questions were raised about privacy – how do we ensure that families’ privacy is respected whilst ensuring they have the opportunity to raise and discuss any concerns they are having over the electronic monitoring process? Families often worry that if they report any concerns this will have a negative impact on their loved one.
- Families need a more informed approach - suggestions about an information pack for families affected by electronic monitoring have been raised.

The floor was then opened up to questions from the group.

- How effective is electronic monitoring in reducing reoffending?
 - ➔ There is ample evidence to suggest that electronic monitoring reduces reoffending, but none to suggest that it changes behaviour in the long term. Long term changes depend on support from social work and third sector agencies – a more integrated approach.
- Jude Clarke stated her concerns that offenders and their families are not considered in the most recent mental health strategy, despite the psychological effects of electronic monitoring (stress, anxiety, social isolation).
 - ➔ Delphine responded that in Belgium, the law requires families of offenders to be taken into consideration.
- Justina Murray stated that she does not think families would appreciate increased statutory involvement in their lives – instead, she believes third sector mentoring schemes would be more successful. There are too many pressures on social workers which prevent them from being able to practice original social work models like they once could.
 - ➔ Delphine added that whilst many families of people being electronically monitored want and need support, others feel that they don't need it. Whilst the offender shares his/her concerns with their partner, the partner does not feel able to share their concerns in return – leaving them with nowhere to turn for support.
- Sarah McHardy asked what more can be done to support employers in employing individuals who are being electronically monitored.
 - ➔ The group discussed their experiences of employment issues which have occurred as a result of an individual being electronically monitored. Delphine reported that some participants in her research advised they had lost their job when their employers learned they were under electronic monitoring.
 - ➔ Mike suggested that more sensitivity needs to be shown to people serving community sentences, and employment-focused organisations such as Apex need to be involved in this discussion.
 - ➔ Hannah discussed the perception that the public often have of offenders who are being electronically monitored – for example, in the USA the tag has connotations of sexual offending etc. Is working whilst wearing an electronic tag practical? Safety elements must be considered if a person is working with machinery etc.
 - ➔ It was agreed that further discussion needs to be had on

the matter.	
AOB	Action
<p>Mary thanked the group for their ongoing support, encouragement and help over the last 5 years. Nancy thanked Mary for convening the group.</p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be confirmed after May's election.</p>	

Date of next meeting: Autumn 2016, TBC