

## Cross-Party Group

### Children and Families Affected by Imprisonment

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016

6pm-8pm

**Attendance:** Mary Fee MSP, Richard Lyle MSP, Nancy Loucks, Rebecca Joyce, Nicole Harrington, Elaine Stalker, Margaret Slater, Briege Nugent, Dinah Aitken, Sue Maxwell, Georgina Lyttle, Tim Parkinson, Linda Dunion, Karen Pryde, Lorraine Davidson, Stuart Callison, Ruth Facchini, Liz Gilchrist, Christine Duncan, Jonathan Sher, Jane Brumpton

**Apologies:** Valerie MacNiven, Lexi Smart, Pete White, Justina Murray, Donald Dickie, Yvonne Donald, Joan Alexander, Becky Cropper, Steve Harte, Anne Watt, Janet Home, Ann Darlington, Kate Philbrick

<b>Welcome and apologies</b>	<b>Action</b>
Richard Lyle MSP welcomed members and advised that Mary Fee MSP would be in attendance later due to a prior engagement.	
<b>Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</b>	
It was noted that the minutes of the last meeting refer to 'Foetal Alcohol Syndrome' which should be replaced with 'Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder'.	Minutes amended to reflect this.
<b>Update on Parliamentary Business</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p>Since the last CPG, Mary Fee has submitted a number of parliamentary questions about prison-based learning and meaningful activity for prisoners. Mary has also requested updates on child and family impact assessments.</p> <p>Mary is on the Justice Committee, which has been conducting an enquiry into the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. The focus has been on the way victims are witnesses are treated within the criminal justice system. Not</p>	

<p>enough support and information is given to people who appear in court as a victim or a witness.</p> <p>The Committee has also taken some preliminary evidence on domestic abuse to the Government for their domestic abuse bill.</p> <p>Mary has suggested that the CPG could focus on the value of meaningful activity in prisons and what types of activity could be introduced to prisons.</p> <p>Mary discussed research being carried out into women offenders with mental health issues, and suggested that once the research report is finalised, the CPG could discuss this.</p> <p>Any other suggestions on topics for the group to discuss are welcome.</p>	
<b>Prison-based Learning as a Means of Supporting Families</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p>Professor Elizabeth Gilchrist, Professor of Forensic Psychology at the University of Worcester, provided an overview of her research into addressing domestic abuse in a criminal justice context.</p> <p>Practitioners advised that parenting classes should be core to criminal justice practice. Professor Gilchrist feels that core funding from SPS for parenting programmes would be beneficial, as well as funding for domestic abuse programmes.</p> <p>A key finding from the research suggests that how well something is delivered is of equal importance to the content of what is delivered. The relationship and trust between those delivering the programme and those undertaking it is key.</p> <p>One group member stated that, in her experiences, prisoners convicted of domestic abuse offences did not view their offence as being serious; they felt victimised for ending up in prison. Ruth Facchini advised it can be difficult to approach</p>	<p>The PowerPoint presentation will be circulated alongside these minutes.</p>

this issue with prisoners convicted of domestic abuse offences. By taking a different approach – involving the prisoners in a creative writing class - they found that they had more success.

Early Years Scotland currently works in 6 prisons in Scotland. They run a fathers programme and are branching into supporting mothers in custody. Their focus is with prisoners who have children aged 0-5 – any prisoner who meets this criteria can work with Early Years Scotland. They look at attachment, bonding, communication and early literacy skills, and a ‘learning through play’ programme where they can put what they have learned into practice with their partners and children. Very quickly the prisoner’s attitudes and beliefs change; from the beginning where they lacked confidence in their parenting ability, they are able to engage and bond with their child better. Other group members commented that prisoners who have gone through the Early Years programme are better learners in other education classes as a result of partaking in the Early Years programme. Early Years Scotland is continually looking for funding support.

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs advised that funding difficulties often prevent them doing certain pieces of work, despite their services being in demand. They spoke of incidents where prisoners developed an addiction whilst in prison that they didn’t have prior to imprisonment. This can be very difficult for the families of these prisoners to come to terms with, and often support from SFAD is required.

Questions were raised about the new women’s estate, and how meaningful activity would be conducted for women in custody. This issue is still very much undecided at present.

A point was raised about other types of learning being introduced into prisons, such as first aid training for prisoners. Stuart Callison, St Andrew’s First Aid, discussed the organisation’s aim of reaching out to groups who would benefit from First Aid training but who are less likely to have been given the opportunity to receive it – such as prisoners.

Jonathan Sher again noted the value of focusing on early prevention, particularly through pre-conception health, and that this would be something of value for the Cross-Party Group to discuss.	
AOCB	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on standards for health and social care due on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. There will be a specific section on people in legal custody, as the broader standards cannot be applied to people in custody. Anything you wish the CPG to address in relation to this please raise prior to 22<sup>nd</sup> January.</li> <li>• COPE has been supporting MEPs to submit a written declaration in support of children with parents in prison. This expires on 12/12/16 and currently has 261 of the 376 required signatures. The CPG encouraged members to write to their MEP if they have not already done so to encourage them to sign.</li> </ul>	

Date of next meeting: 29 March 2017, 6pm