



keeping prisoners and their families together



A review of family and social support within the North East Reducing Re-offending Action Plan.

Barefoot Research and Evaluation

About Northern Rock Foundation

Northern Rock Foundation is a charity formed in 1997, when Northern Rock converted to a plc. The Foundation receives 5% of the plc's pre-tax profits each year and is one of the UK's largest independent funders of charitable activity. Its current objectives are to tackle disadvantage and to improve quality of life in North East England and Cumbria. It does this through grant-making, policy and research work, training and development activities, special initiatives, loans and other investments. *Think* is the Foundation's research series, launched in 2007 as part of its work to inform and influence the wider policy environment.

More information www.nr-foundation.org.uk

About the authors

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Keeping prisoners and their families together

Foreword

Homeward Bound – a play commissioned by Action for Prisoners Families, written and performed by the M6 Theatre Company, is a powerful tool for helping us to understand the complex interplay of family relationships and the impact imprisonment of a loved one has on family members. In a short piece of compelling drama, the audience is brought face to face with the burdens carried by those left behind when a parent and partner goes to prison. This play speaks louder than any words I could use to remind us all of why we need to rethink how we work with prisoners and their families to enable relationships to be maintained.

However, alongside powerful techniques that highlight the need for understanding, we also need detailed analysis of the problems and research that identifies potential solutions. This report, commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation and produced by Barefoot Research and Evaluation, is a follow-up to previous research undertaken in the North East in 2005. The earlier work explored what prisons in the region were doing to support relationships between parents in prison and their families and this is a timely refresh of that original study.

This new report demonstrates how arrangements for taking forward actions under the NOMS Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan and the Pathway structures in the North East of England are having an impact and addressing the needs of the children and families of prisoners. Central to this improvement is the role played by the voluntary and community Sector (VCS).

The Children and Families Pathway (*Families and Social Support* in the North East) is arguably the most under-served in terms of formal structure, policy and resources. The way in which commissioning develops and the extent to which the VCS can win tenders to deliver services is of tremendous importance to the future success of NOMS in helping prisoners to maintain family ties and achieving a reduction in re-offending. Whilst the findings of this report make clear the extent to which prisons in the North East have improved their practice in relation to helping prisoners maintain family ties, there is still a need for the ROM to drive further change – persuading prisons and probation to use existing resources differently in order to achieve better outcomes for children and partners of prisoners, resulting in fewer victims of crime in the future.

Paul Cavadino, Chief Executive, Nacro

Foreword from Northern Rock Foundation

This report is the latest welcome addition to a body of work and experience that the Northern Rock Foundation is helping to build in the field of penal reform. From early in its relatively short life, the Foundation has committed substantial funds to trying to improve the conditions and life chances of prisoners and their families. We believe that this approach serves all in our society, including victims, better than a purely punitive approach to penal affairs.

In 2000, the third year of our operations, the Trustees committed £1.4 million to supporting the Inside Out Trust in running restorative justice projects in eight North East prisons, a scheme evaluated by the International Centre for Prison Studies. That was the beginning of a major investment of our time and resources in exploring and delivering better ways of working with offenders before, during and after custody. We followed this in 2004 with another initiative worth £4.2 million, focused on tackling re-offending; a further £1 million agreed in 2007 to extend and promote the work funded; plus grants worth £1.3 million to organisations working to reduce crime by working in prisons and communities across our area.

But these investments would be merely big numbers without the attention to partners and the determination, shared with them, to learn from experience that are essential characteristics of these projects. We have striven to support evaluation and learning alongside direct services; we have also built strong relationships with statutory commissioners and voluntary sector delivery bodies, and independent analysts of both. A charitable funder, with no political axe to grind and no electorate or shareholders to please, can sometimes be most helpful by raising awkward questions or shining a light on overlooked topics.

In 2003, we responded to a grant application from Nacro to carry out research in the North East into support for family relationships whilst a parent is in prison. The Trustees funded the work knowing that maintaining positive family relationships was an effective way of reducing the risk of re-offending. The original report, completed by Barefoot Research and Evaluation, reached an audience of policy-makers and kick started a useful debate. But given the wide interest in re-offending, and key developments including the establishment of NOMS and the regional action plan on reducing re-offending, in 2006 the Foundation decided it was timely to commission an update.

The most welcome aspect of the revised findings is the clear progress made in addressing some of the concerns highlighted in the original. Improvements have resulted from effective partnership working between ROMs, prisons and voluntary agencies, and we hope that their experience will inform others. More worrying is the evidence that public agencies in this field can only get done those things associated with some measure or target. There is little if any room for flexibility or creative thinking. For these, NOMs and other public sector commissioners will increasingly rely on the voluntary and community organisations. To do so, there will need to be more effective mechanisms to engage the sector and apply the lessons from its work. The report makes several suggestions for how this could be done. We will work hard now, with Nacro and our other partners, to take the report's conclusions and recommendations and ensure they are properly debated within the sector and discussed by statutory commissioners at the highest levels. I hope others reading this report will do the same.

Fiona Ellis
Foundation Director

1 Introduction

This piece of work is a follow-on from research¹ that was completed in 2005 that looked at what prisons in the North East were doing to support relationships between parents in prison and their families. This research is intended to:

- contribute to the work in the region's prisons that supports the children and families of prisoners; and
- inform the wider Reducing Re-offending Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Families and prisoners, as a research topic, was chosen because it had previously² received little attention from policy makers, although it had been recognised by the Government and academics³ as an area which contributes to reducing re-offending. This is now changing and it is an area which is becoming increasingly prominent within policy circles concerned with reducing re-offending. Specifically, there now exists a Family and Social Support Pathway (FSSP) and Delivery Plan (one of seven Pathways in the North East) within the regional Reducing of Re-offending Action Plan (RRAP). However, it remains an area where there has been relatively little experience of service delivery or policy support.

This research has a number of objectives.

- It seeks the reaction to the original research findings from the prisons that were involved and invites detailed feedback. It also provides these prisons with the opportunity to indicate what developments there have been in their establishments in relation to work with prisoners and their families.
- It invites national agencies and academics to comment on the findings in relation to their own experiences, which serves as a national peer review.
- It gathers the reactions of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations who are part of the FSSP and determines their needs.
- It reviews current national and regional policy and practice.
- It looks at the FSSP in relation to the other Pathways in the context of the RRAP.

1 Entitled Keeping Families Together: Maintaining Positive Relationships Between Children and Parents in Prison – A Study in the North East of England and can be seen either on the www.barefootresearch.org.uk or www.vonne.co.uk/issues/offenders/websites.

2 The original research proposal was submitted in 2003.

3 See bibliography in the original research report.

This piece of work is named in the 2007/08 Family and Social Support Delivery Plan as an objective and supports both the development of the Delivery Plan and the Pathway. This in turn will improve the support that is delivered to families of prisoners and parents who are in prison.

BOX 1.1 The Reducing Re-offending Pathways

There are seven Pathways in the Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan, with two sub-pathway groups that sit in their own right, and these are:

1. Accommodation
2. Drugs and Alcohol, incorporating Alcohol as a sub group
3. Education, Employment and Training, incorporating Employer Engagement as a sub group
4. Families and Social Support
5. Finance, Benefit and Debt
6. Health
7. Life Skills and Offending Behaviour

Each Pathway has drawn up a Delivery Plan published in March 2007 in the new Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan. Each Pathway is made up of a group of senior professionals drawn from the statutory, private and voluntary and community sectors in differing degrees and meets on a quarterly basis. These Pathways are tasked with addressing the needs of offenders and ex-offenders with the specific purpose of reducing future re-offending. See section 6.0 for more details on the Pathways.

1.1 Structure of the report

This report is structured in the following way:

- background to the research;
- summary of the original research findings and an update;
- the strategic context and developments within the regional RRAP;
- the perspective on the RRAP from the Prison Service;
- the Family and Social Support Pathway and the voluntary and community Sector (VCS);

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- lessons from other Strategic Pathways;
- how strategy is translated into practice in one prison in the North East;
- the future needs of the VCS;
- discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

The methodology is presented in Appendix one.

1.2 Background to the research

In October 2005, a research report was produced under the auspices of Nacro⁴ (and funded by Northern Rock Foundation) which looked at what prisons in the North East of England were doing to support relationships between a prisoner (particularly a parent) and their family (children). The research presented the experience of prisoners and visitors in four prisons in the North East and examined how policy and practice supported these groups across the region.

As a result of organisational changes and restructuring within Nacro, the work did not come to a satisfactory conclusion: there was no opportunity for those involved in the research to feedback and comment⁵; and the research was not distributed through publication or used for lobbying purposes.

However, the research was not without impact. The findings and recommendations of the research informed the development of the FSSP in its early stages and the need to refresh the research is specified in the current Delivery Plan. In the current research period, it was also reported that the findings in the individual prisons did encourage those establishments to improve provision for parents in prison and their visiting families, including children.

In January 2007, Northern Rock Foundation decided to commission a refresh of the research in the light of significant developments in policy and strategy work in this area. The objective of the refresh work was to feed into the current FSSP and inform the development of the Delivery Plan. This in turn was intended to improve support and contact for parents in prison and to contribute to the reduction of re-offending. Therefore, by working with the FSSP, it was hoped that the work would have maximum impact.

⁴ And was carried out by Barefoot Research and Evaluation (see www.barefootresearch.org.uk).

⁵ This refresh piece of research is intended to bring a closure to the first piece of research by providing the prisons involved the opportunity to make detailed comments on the findings in the first report.

2 Summary of the original research findings with an update

The original research was carried out between 2003 and 2005 in four prisons in the North East: HMP Acklington; HMP Castington (Young Offenders Institute); HMP Low Newton (incorporating at that time, a female adult prison and a Young Offenders Institute); and HMP Holme House. Prison staff, prisoners and visitors were interviewed in all these establishments. In addition, a policy and literature review was undertaken to contextualise the findings. It should be noted that the Regional Reducing Re-offending Strategy was in its infancy when the research was carried out, there were no Pathway groups and the NOMS and the ROM were at very early stages in their development.

2.1 Policy review

The research found a very strong and conducive policy environment to supporting prisoners and their families, although one that was lacking in content and direction i.e. there was commitment from government but no demonstration of any substantial knowledge about the best ways to support prisoners and their families.

Some of the key documents that advocate support for prisoners and their families include the Home Office's 1993 National Framework for the Throughcare of Offenders, which identified that support was necessary in order to prepare the prisoner for safer release. Similarly, the HM Inspectorate of Probation's Strategies for Effective Offender Supervision (1998) highlighted the importance of encouraging positive family relationships when working with offenders. There are also many areas of prison policy and statute which relate to visiting.

The report by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-Prisoners* (2002), which is widely regarded as the standard by which to compare the efforts of prisons, probation and other organisations to reduce re-offending, reinforced policy objectives and paved the way for the Reducing Re-offending Strategies, Delivery Plans and Pathways. It identified nine key areas (also known as 'Offender Needs') which contribute to offending

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and the reduction of offending and one of these is families. From the very beginning, the report presents key findings that identify many offenders from socially disadvantaged groups with weak family relationships.

In 2004, the Home Office published their response to the SEU report in the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan. The Action Plan introduced each of the nine key areas and laid out actions to address each. The key action area for children and families of offenders lacked any real substance and guidance and legislated few actions. The action area was mostly populated by issues that required consideration, development of approaches or further review. In many ways this reflected the absence of any evidence of how best to work with children and families and what achieved results.

The North East Regional Resettlement Strategy: Reducing Re-offending (2004) published by Government Office North East and written by the Reducing Re-offending Board (see section 3.0) is the region's response to both the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan and, by default, the SEU report, and is aimed at reducing re-offending by improving the strategic coordination in the delivery of services for offenders. Within the Resettlement Strategy, there are seven Strategic Pathways which match the core offender needs in the SEU report. Strategic Pathway 4 concerns Family and Social Support and is intended to enable offenders to maintain and develop positive relationships with their family, partners and their home communities.

This was the policy situation when the research was completed. In summary, there was substantial policy weight and the North East Regional Resettlement Strategy: Reducing Re-offending outlined the ROM's intention, but there was very little recommended action to match the strategy.

2.2 Research findings

The primary research that took place in four of the region's prisons found that:

- Visiting families often experience extreme difficulties whilst visiting a family member, partner or parent in prison. These difficulties have a particularly negative impact on children and include the emotional stress of the visit, poor prison staff attitudes, financial cost and travel times (even if the family lives near to the prison, a visit will still mean a whole

day out). From the beginning of the visiting process, visiting families encounter inadequate telephone booking systems and are faced with long and exhausting trips (with children). On arrival, they experience long queues, often intimidating security procedures, rarely receive their allocated visit time and have unsatisfactory contact with a member of their family that they have possibly not seen for weeks. These findings are very similar to findings of other research with visiting families (e.g. Murray, 2005, 2006, 2007; Boswell and Wedge, 2005⁶).

- As a result of the above, routine visits are inadequate opportunities for family relationships to be supported or maintained.
- Prisoners value seeing their family, particularly their children, although they often disliked their children visiting on routine visits (because of the stresses listed previously). Prisoners who participated in family days, or had opportunities to spend time with their children, were highly appreciative and reported that strengthened family relationships had a positive impact on whether or not they re-offended. However, many prisoners located where there were family days found them very difficult to access.
- Provision by the prison service for family days is very poor. Some prisons have no provision for family visiting outside of normal visits. Others do have provision but make it almost impossible for prisoners and families to access those opportunities. Other prisons put on family days so infrequently as to severely limit the impact they have on improving family relationships. Most prisons only allowed well behaved prisoners access to family days and these prisoners are arguably likely to be returning to a stable family i.e. family days were seen as a privilege rather than an opportunity to address an offender need. Many prisons with weak or infrequent provision openly state in their policy that they do much to support and maintain family relationships.
- Although prisons stated their commitments to supporting family relationships and also that they did provide support for maintaining relationships, provision was not only poor but in certain prisons (although not all), the attitudes of prison staff were reported to be extremely negative towards families of prisoners.

6 Murray, J. (2005). The effects of imprisonment on families and children of prisoners. In A. Liebling & S. Maruna (Eds.), *The effects of imprisonment* (pp. 442–492). Cullompton, Devon, England: Willan.
 Murray, J. (2007). The cycle of punishment: Social exclusion of prisoners and their children. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 7, 55–81.
 Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). Evidence-based programs for children of prisoners. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 5, 721–736.
 Boswell, G. and Wedge, P. (2005), An Evaluation of the Work of the Eastern Region Families Partnership 2002–2005, Ormiston Time for Families.

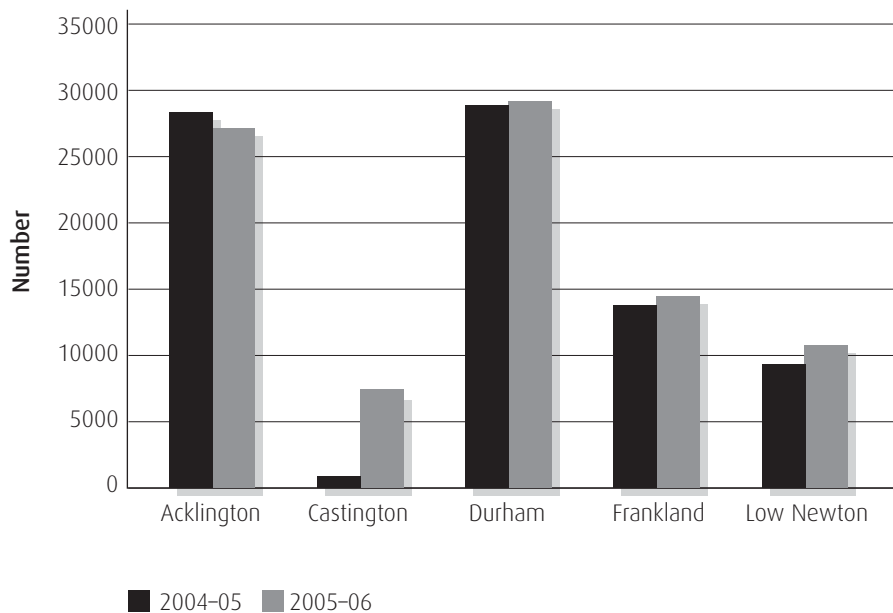
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- The two voluntary sector organisations (NEPACS and the Holme House Visitor Centre) which managed the visitor centres and provided other key services were under resourced and in some cases under valued by the prisons. Despite this, they provided highly significant and valuable services to visiting families and prisoners. Other than these two VCS organisations, at the time of the original research, there was no VCS provision for parents or their families in these prisons, other than the ROTA project in HMP Acklington and HMP YOI Castington.

On the basis of these findings, the research made several recommendations.

- Family days and child-parent visits need to be as widely available as possible to all prisoners and should cease being considered as privileges. This means that the individual establishments need to make them easier to access (i.e. HMP Holme House and HMP YOI Castington).
- Where family provision already exists, the quality of that provision must be improved, for example in HMP Low Newton, the child-parent days must be made accessible at times outside of school hours and the Millennium Days must be better resourced and it partners and carers should be allowed to participate in the day.

Visitor Numbers 2004-05 to 2005-06



- Where family visiting provision does not exist, i.e. in HMP Acklington, it must be started.
- It is recommended that information on whether the offender has any dependant children be collected on admission to custody. At present this information is not collected and knowing parenting responsibilities is the first step in addressing needs. OASys, the risk assessment tool, needs to include information about family status and responsibilities (something that it does not currently do i.e. information on if the prisoner has children or if the prisoner is the primary carer of any children). If this is not known, it is almost impossible to design any family or resettlement support either whilst the prisoner is in custody or upon release.
- Special visits, child-parent or family days should not be regarded as privileges as any time spent maintaining and rebuilding family relationships will lead to greater success in the post-release settlement process.
- There is training for staff on their attitudes and how to speak to and deal with visiting families, especially children.
- Inconsistencies between prisons about what is and is not permitted in visiting different prisons should either be ironed out or made very clear to visitors, so if a prisoner is transferred, then visitors are clear about the different rules about visiting (a cause of many family problems) e.g. accepted forms of identification or how many visitors are permitted.
- The organisations that administer the visitor centres must be assisted to participate in resettlement policy and other key meetings inside the prison. This includes investment by the prison to free the time of visitor centre managers to allow them to participate in discussions about resettlement i.e. contribute to staffing costs.

2.3 Progress and update

It is quite remarkable what has happened in the few years since the original research was completed, both in policy and in practice. It is also quite remarkable that visitor numbers have increased between 2004/05 and 2005/06 (with the exception of HMP Acklington which showed a small decline) in the region's prisons (where there is data).

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In relation to policy, the North East Regional Resettlement Strategy has developed into a Regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan (this is discussed in section 3.0). Policy has been strengthened and there are moves to operationalise this policy as it relates to parents in prison and visiting families through the development of the FSSP and the associated Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan and the RRAP are being introduced through service level agreements in an attempt to embed them within the operational (prison) environment – although this is a longer term process.

There have also been developments within the prisons where the research was carried out, led by the Heads of Resettlement, with the most notable developments being seen within HMP Holme House. Many of the recommendations made in the original research have been fulfilled in certain prisons, for example, addressing staff attitudes and resourcing of the visitor centres. These developments are presented in the following sections.

However, provision for the families of prisoners and parents in prison remains poor in the region's prisons and there continue to be significant gaps in provision. Voluntary and community organisations are best placed to deliver services to families and prisoners, yet they lack sufficient resources and often opportunities in the region's prisons and communities.

Please note that no primary research has been carried out for this update (i.e. no discussions with either prisoners or visiting families) and the following section is based on reports from Heads of Resettlement. None of the reports have been verified.

2.3.1 HMP Holme House

In the original research, HMP Holme House was found to have a significant stated commitment and policy towards supporting the maintenance of family relationships which did not translate into prison practice. It was found that the Holme House Visitor Centre Society (which manages the visitor centre) was under significant strain (both in terms of time and resources) and received little if no support from the prison, the family learning course was almost impossible for prisoners to subscribe to and attitudes of certain staff on visits were very negative towards visitors.

Since the research, there have been significant developments in prison practice which seem to have addressed all of the issues identified by the research. The developments are listed below.

- The prison has been proactive in improving staff attitudes by accessing Kids VIP training and being involved in making a Kids VIP film about a child's perspective of visits.
- At the time the researcher visited the prison, the play area was closed. There is now a new facility which is a significant improvement on the previous play area; it is able to accommodate more children and the age limits have been relaxed; and the children are able to take small toys and books back to their tables. There is now a service level agreement (SLA) with NEPACS to run the newly equipped play area. There has been very positive feedback from visitors about the new play area.
- There is an SLA with New Bridge to deliver eight family matters courses in 2006/07.
- The prison has provided additional funding to the Visitor Centre Society to fund staff to support the work of the visitor centre manager and free up their time to attend key meetings in the prison. The Head of Resettlement and the prison have attempted to ensure that the centre and the staff feel involved in the wider work of the prison and are consulted about changes which affect them e.g. the Principal Officer in charge of visits set up a visits meeting which the visitor centre manager attends (this has been superseded by the Management of Visitors project – see later). The centre worked closely with ROTA during the launch of an information kiosk (see later) and participated in Diversity week. The visitor centre manager also recently attended a ROM event looking at developing purposeful activity at the prison. However, the visitor centre still lacks email and access to the prison's intranet.
- The prison librarian has developed links with the Children's Services Officer in Stockton Borough Libraries and there have been story telling sessions taking place in the visitor centre.
- The prison took part in October 2006 in the Action for Prisoners Families 'is our prison family friendly challenge'. There was a range of activities throughout the half term week including a drama production performed by prisoners from the Therapeutic Community in visits for their invited guests.

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- There has recently been an information kiosk installed at the visitor centre, as part of the ROTA (Reducing Offending Through Advice) project. The kiosks were launched at Holme House in November 2006 and provide visitors with a range of information covering areas such as health, finance and debt.
- The prison has purchased a wall-mounted plasma TV screen for the visitor centre which allows information to be passed from the prison to visitors and for the prison to show DVDs demonstrating activities prisoners are able to access in the prison.
- The Head of Security established a working party (including representation from partner organisations such as NEPACS and the Visitors Centre Society) which ran from November 2006 to March 2007. Its objectives were:
 - to review the current procedures for arranging domestic, official and legal visitors;
 - to evaluate physical arrangements and presentation of relevant areas;
 - to identify objectives from the Prison Service (including resettlement and security), Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the requirements of visitors;
 - to establish improved communication between visitors, prison departments and the gate; and
 - to improve the physical environment for visitors

This project has already resulted in the commissioning of a mural from the prisoners in the Education Department to be exhibited in the visitor centre, which will represent the visitors' journey from the gate to the visits room, finishing in the play area. Kids VIP has also been invited into the prison in February to provide its perspective on the visits area and what improvements can be made.

- There is an FSSP Delivery Plan in place within the prison, which was developed in consultation with the partner agencies and staff who work in visits and the Head of Resettlement attends the regional FSSP meetings.

HMP Holme House's FSSP Delivery Plan has been developed independently and provides a structure for family and social support development within the prison. There are many extremely laudable objectives within the Delivery Plan, such as including families in the sentence planning process and family days (see appendix two). For example, one objective is to:

Introduce a weekly Family Visits session for fathers and children. During the father/child visit support groups for mothers/careers will be run in the Visitors Centre. These support sessions will include working with and developing existing links with VCS support schemes available in the community.

This objective was one of the main recommendations of the original research report.

In addition to this and an activity which integrates all Pathways, are the prison's plans to implement a resettlement wing (house block). It has currently identified a unit which accommodates 102 prisoners and has scoped criteria for the house block of prisoners in the last four to eight months prior to release sentenced to 12 months or more (but also to include prisoners preparing for the open or Category D estate, particularly Kirklevington). The objective is to create a resettlement focused house block with a community ethos and an emphasis upon personal responsibility. All internal and external departments and partners with a community re-integration focus have been invited to be actively involved in planning and developing a programme and regime for the house block across all reducing re-offending pathways.

2.3.2 HMP Low Newton

Since the original research was completed, there have been a number of developments with the work that HMP Low Newton carries out with families and prisoners.

The prison has constituted its own FSSP group which is based on the previous child protection committee, originally established to meet the requirements of the Prison Service concerning regimes for those under 18 in 2000, as Low Newton then accepted juveniles. When Low Newton was no longer required to take juveniles, the committee remained in place as a forum to discuss child protection issues and pregnant women, but it had strayed considerably into other issues including positive visit experiences, child parent visits and family contact. NEPACS was an active contributory member of this meeting and was given a role in child parent visits. This now forms the FSSP group.

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The prison has recently commissioned Barnardo's to carry out research into family issues affecting women in the prison. This piece of work will be used by their FSSP group as the starting point for setting up an action plan to develop resettlement services within the Pathway. The most recent meeting of the Pathway drew, in its initial discussions, on the Barnardo's research and a piece of work undertaken by the prison chaplain in January 2006 on family visits. This included a visit by Kids VIP to assess the visits area. A Kids VIP video was also shown at a full staff meeting in February 2007 to improve staff attitudes.

In relation to the specific issue of visits, the prison's Family and Social Support Delivery Plan will include the provision of family days, provision for visits of older children in terms of quality contact with mothers, enhancing the Millennium Day (all-day mother/child visits run once a month) visits, exploring activities which will develop the mother/child relationship and family attendance at sentence plan reviews.

The prison has improved its relationship with NEPACS, which now attends the FSSP as do a number of other VCS groups such as Parentline, After Adoption, New Bridge, Barnardo's and Open Gate. The meeting is also attended by prison staff from a range of departments. NEPACS also holds quarterly meetings in the visitor centre to which the prison sends representatives from the Resettlement Unit (who coordinate voluntary and community sector interventions within the prison) and the Operations Unit who administer visits. This is a forum for all parties to raise any issues of concern about visits and to facilitate effective communication.

The Barnardo's staff who undertook the research gave some positive feedback on prison staff and how they respond to the needs of visitors, especially children. Examples were given of prison staff making searching like a game and getting down to the children's height level to explain in simple terms about visits. They were also seen as being supportive to the mothers after visits had finished. A ROTA information kiosk has just been installed at the visitor centre, similar to the one at the HMP Holme House visitor centre.

Child-parent visits are continuing and run weekly on a Friday morning. The prison recognises that this is not ideal especially for children being taken out of school and also because of the distance some families have to travel for a morning visit. However, take up of these visits over the last

five months has risen dramatically due to the child-parent visits staff actively encouraging take up of the visits and engaging actively with the women on the visits. Millennium visits take up has also increased for the same reason but again the prison recognises that the venue and range of activities could be improved. NEPACS is in discussion about how it can assist with enhancing these visits. NEPACS also recognises the need to review and improve the Millennium Days and has expressed a willingness and an interest to become more involved in the organisation and management of the days.

The prison also ran an Action for Prisoners Family Day in October 2006 which also appears to have been a catalyst for raising the profile of child-parent contact.

2.3.3 HMP Acklington

There have been few developments at HMP Acklington since the original research was completed and, unfortunately, the prison continues to wait for the completion of the Family Centre.

The prison continues to deliver the Family Learning courses and there continue to be plans to invite Newbridge and Kids VIP to work in the establishment.

2.3.4 HMP YOI Castington

This prison is unique among the case study establishments because it contains both prisoners who are parents and also children of families in the community. There are thus two requirements: opportunities for prisoners who are fathers to spend time with their children and partners, and good quality visiting opportunities for visiting parents to see their children.

HMP YOI Castington was inspected by the HMIP in June 2006. The inspection found that the Family Links phone line was an example of best practice and they also found that the new system of tickets for visitors had greatly improved conditions for visiting families who could now use the visitor centre (instead of having to queue outside the prison in all weather conditions). The inspection made a number of recommendations for improving visits including a review of the searching strategy and improving the booking system. The inspection also agreed with one of the original research's recommendations of increasing the number of family days for parents in the institute.

2

Newbridge has recently secured funding from Northern Rock Foundation for a Family Links worker to work with young offenders and their families in the prison.

HMP YOI Castington now has a Family and Social Support Delivery Plan as part of its Reducing Re-offending Strategy and this is presented below.

HMP YOI Castington Strategic Pathway Four: Children and Families – Reducing Re-offending Strategy

Induction

Current Service

- Telephone contact with home on arrival to unit
- T1v assessment identifies any family problems or concerns
- Family information booklet provided at courts

Planned Service

- NEPACS to interview Trainees on induction and liaise with Families

Immediate Needs Help

Current Service

- Encourage ongoing family support
- Peer support offered
- Family Links Line (01670 382150) Contact, concerns, problem solving
- Establish if Trainee would like to begin contact with an outside faith community
- Facilitate ongoing contact between Trainees and outside faith communities
- NEPACS service offered to families through Visitors Centre
- Childline and Samaritans available 24 hours a day via mobile phone
- Family Information booklet (visits, contacts, advice)
- Chaplaincy presence in Visitors Centre 2 hours per week.

Planned Service

- Role of family development officer to be drawn up for consideration

Programmes/Regimes

Current Service

- Family friendly visits. Father/son special visits and events, family days on residential units
- Family invited to Initial Training Plan and the subsequent Review Meetings
- Encourage family involvement in the YO sentence plan including attendance
- YOT/Probation are informed when a young person is placed on ACCT support

- Families are invited to the ACCT reviews and to Case Conferences where necessary
- Staff trained as Listeners to support victims of Sexual abuse
- NYAS, National Youth Advisory Service on juvenile units
- Social Worker in post working with Looked After/ Care system trainees
- New Bridge delivering Family Matters course and on-site full-time
- Quarterly Newsletter for Fathers included in Castington Prisoner Newsletter
- MOSAIC counselling for sexual abuse
- 3 x staff trained as Family Liaison (Death in Custody)
- 2 x staff trained in Bereavement Service
- Tackle IT – Bully/Victim mediation
- Open forum for families in Visitors Centre by Safer Custody

Planned Service

- Families to be informed when a young person has been subject to Control and Restraint Procedures

Pre-Release

Current Service

- YOT/Probation are informed when a young person is placed on F2052SH support
- Access to the 'Church Network for Ex-Offenders in the North East'
- BLISS, Family mediation
- Barrie Cooper now represents Chaplaincy at a regional level

Work in the Community

Current Service

- Principal Officer – Quality Assurance (Child Protection) in post
- NEPACS
- Action for Prisoners Families
- BLISS, Family mediation
- Northumberland Education Dept. Richard Bishop. Safe/Healthy Schools (anti-bullying)
- Work with Lucy Faithful in providing support to families of young people convicted of sex offences
- Safeguarding Social Worker works in Partnership with Local Authority for children in need, looked after children and leaving care

Planned Service

- Barnardo's – Housing Project for Young People

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2.4 National peer review

The original research report and findings were distributed widely amongst national agencies working in the family and social support arena, academic institutions and individuals with a track record in related research. The purpose of this exercise was to put the findings of the research up for national peer review.

The research was unanimously accepted by national agencies and academics as an accurate representation of the experiences of prisoners and their visiting families. Furthermore, national agencies ratified the policy and academic reviews about the role of offenders' families in reducing re-offending and the difficulties they experience whilst a parent or family member is in prison.

Peter Wedge from the University of East Anglia, who has published widely on the topic of prisoners and their children, stated:

I strongly support the idea of informing policy-makers about the issues you discuss. I think, though, that you should distinguish between those that have been thoroughly exposed by previous research, and those emerging from your more recent project. The issues for children and families which your research addressed were already reasonably well-known and have led to various requirements or 'good practice' initiatives; all of this should be acknowledged. The extent to which (in your sample establishments) policies and advisory instruments have been adopted/not and have/haven't become standard practice is 'new' and, as such, should be the main aspect of your report.

Professor Gwyneth Boswell, also from the University of East Anglia, stated:

The research adds to the existing studies/findings about the need for systems and services to support family ties. Clearly, all such research should be used to persuade NOMS and individual prisons to invest in such systems and services, particularly in the light of the Children and Families Pathway to reducing re-offending.

The Ormiston Trust (which leads the Eastern Region Children and Families Pathway) stated:

[The research] confirms many of our findings and lends weight to the call for further action... Your findings and conclusions are very much in line with prison surveys and other studies I have carried out in the Eastern Area. We'd like to think that in prisons where we have Ormiston projects we can demonstrate several examples of good practice with family support, such as child-friendly visits, parenting programmes and family liaison, but I can certainly relate to all the difficulties encountered elsewhere.

Joe Murray of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University, another respected academic in this field, stated that the original research findings were relevant to the Prison Service and the VCS, although *"the research is not the type that academics would use, although I am sure it will be useful to practitioners"*.

NEPACS and the Prison Reform Trust both agree with the findings and find them an accurate reflection of their experience.

In the light of the peer review, it would seem that the original research findings are robust, accurate and relevant.

3 The strategic context and developments within the regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan

In November 2004, the ROM published its Regional Resettlement Strategy. This outlined the context and policy framework with which the ROM and its partners plan to reduce re-offending in the North East.

In 2005, the ROM published the Reducing Re-offending Action Plan. This strategy paper accompanied the creation of seven Pathways: Accommodation; Drugs and Alcohol; Health; Families and Social Support; Education and Training; Life Skills and Offending Behaviour; and Debt and Finance. These Pathways were essentially quarterly committee meetings made up of individuals who could operationalise the contents of the RRAP. The seven Pathways created their own individual delivery plans, which were ratified in January 2007. An example of a delivery plan can be seen in appendix three.

The RRAP is directed and controlled by an executive board, which has an independent chair and a full time secretariat (a secondee from the prison service located at GONE). There is also an RRAP forum which is a think tank that meets quarterly that informs the work of the RRAP and the RRAP board.

BOX 3.1 NOMS, the ROM, commissioning and SLAs

NOMS was created in 2004 with the aim of reducing re-offending and protecting the public. The ROM, under the national body NOMS, will ultimately have responsibility for commissioning services within the Prison and the Probation Service. The ROM therefore manages the Prison and Probation Service via the commissioning process.

This is a phased process, as NOMS was only created in 2004 and represents a significant culture change in both services. The development of NOMS, and consequently the ROM, is a gradual process placing much emphasis on relationship building and will see full commissioning powers in 2008/09 (i.e. budgets will then be fully controlled in the region).

The ROM has had a service level agreement (SLA) with the Prison Area Office and the prisons in the region since 2005/06. The prisons and Area Office respond to the SLA through their delivery plans.

In the 2005/06 SLA, there were objectives to improve the reduction of re-offending although these were non-essential and did not affect delivery (i.e. the prisons did not have to achieve these objectives in order to fulfil their SLA). Similarly, the delivery of the objectives related to the regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plan contained within the 2006/07 SLA were based more on goodwill than a statutory responsibility (a 'would like you to do' opposed to a 'must do').

In the 2007/08 SLA, there have been a number of new 'metrics' (i.e. targets) that relate to the RRAP and also the FSSP, for example:

- the percentage of prisoners held near to home;
- the number of domestic violence programmes;
- the number of hours of face-to-face contact between a prisoner and their family;
- the number of family days per month.

The SLA contains two sections: Key Performance Targets (KPTs) and Management Information. The KPTs are mandatory deliverables and are those which the Prison Service must fulfil as a funding requirement.

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BOX 3.1 continued

The Management Information contains targets that demonstrate the management efficiency and effectiveness of the prison, although they are not mandatory requirements. The new metrics that relate to the RRAP are contained within the Management Information within the SLA and not within the KPTs, and so they are not a mandatory requirement to fulfil. However, management information metrics often become KPTs in subsequent years.

This is a demonstration of a phased process by the ROM to include and embed RRAP targets in SLAs and consequently in Prison Service delivery (business) plans. In the past, there have been no targets for family support within prison SLAs and little relating to the reduction of re-offending.

To summarise the ROM commissioning process:

- 2006/07 was about relationship building;
- 2007/08 the ROM has limited rewards and sanction⁷;
- 2008/09 with notice, the ROM can implement rewards and sanction.

In addition to the SLA, the ROM has with the prison service, it also has two SLAs with the Probation Service in each of the probation areas: one SLA for offender management (i.e. offenders on licence in the community) and one for interventions (e.g. drug treatment courses, ETE programmes, etc.). The Probation Service covers three areas in the North East: Northumbria, Durham and Teesside and consequently the ROM has six SLAs across all probation areas.

⁷ For example, the ROM can ask for a market test for a service or prison to determine value for money and whether it is fit for purpose. If the service or prison fails this, the ROM can implement a performance improvement process. It is currently (2007) doing this in one prison in the region.

4 The Prison Service's perspective

There was an agreement from the North East Prison Service that family support has a beneficial impact on re-offending and it would welcome an increase in the minimum provision if it was properly resourced.

The prisons in the North East currently maintain a minimum provision of routine domestic visits and allowing prisoners to earn money to make telephone calls, although most prisons provide opportunities far in excess of this (see section 2.3 for some examples). There are many other commitments that the prisons must fulfil first.

There are systemic process reasons why family and social support provision is weak. For example, the Prison Service has a very well established and structured performance management framework and set of targets which are prescribed by Headquarters or NOMS which it must adhere to, including a service level agreement with the ROM. This framework and standards make it very difficult to work to anything that is external to it. The Reducing Re-offending Strategy, which has been created in the region, is currently separate to this framework and there are currently no related structures, targets or obligations to meet anything within the Strategy. From a Governor's perspective or from the HMPS Area Manager's, meeting targets is *"inevitably the priority"*. These concerns are being addressed through the commissioning process and the SLAs (see Box 3.1).

Added to this, the Pathways do not have any formal authority to direct people or resources and as a result they have failed to engage with a series of stakeholders, particularly the Prison Service. Consequently, the Prison Service has historically been poorly represented on the Pathway Groups. This is in many ways related to the above point, in that the Prison Service does not see any direct relevance in attending the Pathways. However, action is currently underway to address these issues.

The Area Manager felt that the Pathway Groups, in order to be effective, needed adequate resources (to do things) and also executive power i.e. to make decisions to affect resourcing issues. In addition, there needs to be *"buy-in"* from stakeholders and the Pathways need to be well attended by

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senior staff from the Prison Service. Currently the attendance from the Prison Service is different depending on the individual Pathway; at some there is attendance by governing Governors and at others there are representatives from less senior staff. It was felt that those staff from the Prison Service that do attend need to be given the mandate of representing the entire North East Area Prisons, be able to speak on their behalf, be able to commit to decisions (or at least secure decisions with a direct link to senior staff very quickly after a meeting) and be able to report back directly to senior managers within the area of the Prison Service they are representing, to authorise and resource decisions. Currently, representatives on the Pathways may only feel able to speak about their prisons, their area of expertise or as an individual, which significantly affects their impact on the Pathway and the impact of the Pathway on the area's prisons.

There also needs to be a feedback loop from the Pathway Groups to the Senior Management Team of the Prison Service. The Area Manager stated *"the Pathways need to get into the guts of the Prison Service"*, and the plans to enhance Prison Service representation are designed to achieve this objective.

The Area Manager felt that the prison population was not a significant factor in curtailing work around reducing re-offending. He stated that whilst the prison estate's primary responsibility was essentially providing a secure hotel function, they did have a responsibility to provide interventions to reduce re-offending. He stated *"they're not mutually exclusive, delivering interventions and holding prisoners ... but an increase in prison numbers doesn't help"*. However, he also said that the population held by the Prison Service has been capped at the level deemed to be safe i.e. that is the limit with which it can hold prisoners and deliver interventions; *"we have defined our capacity and capped it at that"*. However, it was also felt that a rapid expansion of additional capacity is a drain on management attention.

There are already moves to link the Pathways to the business plans of the individual prisons and two establishments (HMP YOI Castington and HMP Acklington) are already doing so. They have done this by creating an Annex to their existing business plan which outlines how the Pathways connect to their core work, including which national and local targets the establishment is fulfilling, for example, under the Accommodation Pathway there are two associated targets of 1) assessing the housing needs of each prisoner on

inception and 2) ensuring each prisoner has secure accommodation on release. However, this in itself is no measure of how meaningful these actions are to reducing re-offending.

Area Office is currently in the process of linking the Pathways into the Area Business Plan for the Prison Service in a similar way and after this has been done, it will ensure that all the prisons in the region will create their Business Plans in the same format. This will provide the first step in integrating work in the Pathways into the individual prison's core work. However, there is currently no assurance of the quality of that work (e.g. some of the targets will be 'has the prisoner been asked a question?') and further work and attention will need to develop the areas of Pathway work (e.g. to ensure that prisons are appropriately and adequately addressing offender needs). However, having said all this, there is no formal requirement for the individual establishments to reflect the Pathways in their Business Plans. Hopefully this requirement will be authorised in the near future (by the Area Manager).

Currently, the Pathways seem to be de facto think tanks, some more effective than others, which feed back with varying degrees of success to the Prison Service. Bearing in mind that the Pathways have other objectives than simply involving or improving work in the Prison estate, it cannot be denied that the Prison Service is a dominant factor in improving the work around the reduction of re-offending and needs to be a central player in all discussions. In order to give the Pathways impact (i.e. to give them 'teeth'), they must be resourced, given executive powers, be properly attended by relevant individuals and effectively report back to the Prison and Probation Services. Currently some Pathways are stronger than others and this is largely dependent on the chair and who attends the meetings and how they feed back decisions.

5 The Family and Social Support Pathway and the voluntary and community sector (VCS)

The FSSP contains more VCS agencies than any of the other Pathways. This is due to two factors: firstly, the lack of statutory involvement in provision in this area; and secondly, the historical involvement of the sector in supporting prisoners and their families, which dates back to the Quaker movement in the 1700s (Elizabeth Fry being the most noteworthy). Two of the main VCS organisations currently working in the North East, Newbridge and NEPACS, are cumulatively more than 150 years old.

It is an area of work that has also been attributed to low cost⁸ (often no cost) interventions, one which has had no formal measure of effectiveness⁹ and an area of high need¹⁰. All these reasons promote the involvement of the VCS, as statutory agencies have been reluctant to become involved.

There are many small VCS organisations who work in the arena of families and social support (there are also some large organisations such as Barnardo's, NSPCC and NCH – although these have provided limited services in the North East's prisons) and this is due to the varied needs of offenders and their families. This spread of small agencies within the Pathway has the advantages of flexibility and responsiveness but also has the significant disadvantage of financial vulnerability. What is clear however, is that these agencies either provide, or have the potential to provide, services which the statutory sector does not.

It needs to be recognised that working with a prisoner and their family is extremely difficult and complex and requires certain skills. It is also an area which cuts across many offender needs, such as drug dependency, literacy, psychological support, accommodation, etc. As a result of this complexity and difficulty, it often causes Prison Officers or other professionals within the prison (e.g. education staff) to "back off" and leave the area untouched. The VCS has traditionally been the sector which addresses complex needs within a single area of focus, e.g. families of prisoners, carers of drug abusers, etc. As a result of the complexity of work within this area and as a result of the lack of support and provision offered by statutory agencies,

8 With a reliance on voluntary work.

9 There is an absence of robust evaluation work on whether interventions work in relation to reducing re-offending.

10 Many families and children require sustained and in many cases intensive support.

family and social support work must be supported by establishments providing voluntary sector agencies access to prisoners.

5.1 The Family and Social Support Pathway

The FSSP started to meet in September 2005, and there are two levels of membership (see the following table). The first is direct membership made up of those attending the Pathway meetings and those who usually play a role in providing services to children and families of offenders either in prison or in the community. The second level is associated membership; these agencies receive minutes, information and mailings. The associated membership has a number of purposes: to provide information to agencies on the periphery of services to offenders and their families; to provide a route in to work with offenders and their families; and to provide core members with details of the types of agencies who are interested in work in this area.

Direct members

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| ■ Alternatives to Violence Project Northumbria | ■ HMP Durham | ■ Opengate |
| ■ Barnardo's | ■ HMP Holme House | ■ Parentline Plus |
| ■ Citizens Advice Bureau | ■ HMPS Area Resettlement | ■ Prison Fellowship England and Wales |
| ■ Community Chaplaincy NE | ■ Holme House | ■ RELATE NE |
| ■ Contact a Family | ■ Visitors Centre Society | ■ Safeguard |
| ■ Escape Family Support Ltd | ■ Kids VIP | ■ Samaritans |
| ■ GONE | ■ NEPACS | ■ SMART JUSTICE |
| | ■ Newbridge | ■ Start Project Churches Acting Together |
| | ■ NOMS | ■ U Choose |
| | ■ Northumbria Probation | ■ VONNE |

Associate members

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| ■ Action for Prisoners Families | ■ DDRC | ■ Inside Out Trust |
| ■ AVP | ■ Diva | ■ Prison Fellowship |
| ■ Bliss Mediation | ■ Durham and Darlington Race and Equality Council | ■ Salvation Army |
| ■ Chat | ■ Dyslexia Institute | ■ The Children's Society |
| ■ Children North East | ■ Hibiscus | ■ Win Elms |
| ■ CRC | | ■ WRVS |

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Boxes 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate two different examples of the roles of the VCS in this Pathway.

The Pathway lead is satisfied with progress so far and the development of the Delivery Plan and particularly satisfied with the investment from the VCS agencies and their willingness to engage. Particular achievements were identified as a full-day event developing the Delivery Plan, projects that have been developed as a consequence of the Pathway (e.g. a mentoring project with ex-offenders from HMP Holme House) and projects currently in development (e.g. the Families in Transition idea from Finchale College in Durham).

The development of the Pathway has had its difficulties, particularly as at the beginning there was no strategic direction from the RRAP Board, no specification of timescales (e.g. periods of review for the Delivery Plan) and no terms of reference for the group (a situation which continues today). There has also been a significant investment of time from the Pathway lead, who has many other roles to fulfil within their organisation (i.e. in domains other than work with offenders) and there has been increasing investment required within the RRAP and Pathway work. For example, at the beginning of the RRAP, the Pathway lead attended the RRAP Forum, then they led the FSSP, then they attended the RRAP Pathway Leads' meeting and now they are attending project development meetings concerning the FSSP. In short, the workload has got bigger and bigger.

It has been identified that the next six months is a critical time for the Pathway and the VCS agencies engaged with it. There has been significant momentum built up with the development of the Delivery Plan and a substantial amount of time committed by the VCS agencies and now those agencies will want to see it delivered. If no action is demonstrated, then VCS participation may fall.

There are varying perceptions of the role of the Pathway and its effectiveness amongst its members, with some agencies feeling that it is sufficiently action-oriented and others feeling that it is a 'talking shop' and has a purpose of information exchange. Some agencies would like to see it more focused on developing actions and others say that they would like to be more involved but they did not have the capacity (i.e. they are too busy with their core services).

It seems the varying appreciation of the Pathway is dependent on the nature of the member organisation, the services it provides (whether directly providing services in or around the prison system), how long it has been involved in the Pathway and how large it is. For example, one organisation, which had been involved with the FSSP from the beginning, has a history of providing services in the North East's prisons and was recently invited back into prisons to deliver services (in one instance because of networking with the Prison Service at a FSSP meeting). It found the Pathway very effective. Another organisation, which provides generic parenting support in the community and which has identified the families of offenders as a potential client group, appreciates the Pathway for the level of information it provides and is there almost as an observer. One organisation with a long history of providing services for families of offenders is under such funding constraints that it cannot participate fully in the Pathway and the development of the Delivery Plan; another which has recently joined and is not involved in work in prisons (but would like to be) sees the meetings as opportunities for discussion rather than 'doing' sessions. In other words, the Pathway meetings are 'many things to many people'.

It was identified by the VCS members that there is a need for a regional infrastructure to support the VCS in work with offenders and their families, particularly as the CRISP project has now ended. This would demonstrate to the VCS that it is being supported to continue engaging with the FSSP and the RRAP and that the sector is involved in strategic discussions. A solution to such a need is outlined in section 8.0.

5 5.2 VCS mapping exercise

The following VCS organisations provide services for parents in prison and their families in the North East:

Organisation/ Prison or Community	Service	Date started	Numbers
Newbridge HMP YOI Castington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family Matters Course ■ Family Links Worker 	2005 2007	Total of four (six week) courses One worker (not yet in post)
HMP Holme House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family Matters Course 	2005	Total of eight (six week) courses
HMP Frankland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family Matters Course 		
NEPACS HMP Acklington and HMP YOI Castington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visitor centre, children's play area and tea bar 	Over 10 years (Ackl. play area 2001, Cast. 2006)	All services continuous
HMP Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visitor centre, children's play area and tea bar ■ Young People's Project ■ Extended family visits 	Over 10 years 2002 Over 10 years	
HMP Deerbolt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Play area 	2003	
HMP Frankland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visitor centre and tea bar ■ Play area 	2002 Over 10 years	
HMP Holme House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Play area ■ Tea bar 	2006	
HMP Low Newton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Visitor centre ■ Play area ■ Young People's Project ■ Extended family visits 	Over 10 years 2000 2006 2002	
HMP Kirklevington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tea bar 	2004	
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Caravans Project; holidays for newly released prisoners ■ Community aid grants to prisoners and their families 	Over 10 years Over 10 years	

Organisation/ Prison or Community	Service	Date started	Numbers
Home House HMP Holme House Visitor Centre Society	■ Visitor centre	Over 10 years	Continuous
Parentline Plus HMP Durham	■ Parenting courses	2005/2006	Three (have not worked in Durham since 2006)
HMP Durham Visitor Centre and HMP Low Newton Visitor Centre	■ Support for parents in the Visitor centre	2005/2006	Two and a half days a week
Sunderland Mind HMP Durham Visitor Centre	■ Mental health support for families	2006	Weekly
HMP Frankland Visitor Centre			
Mother's Union HMP Low Newton	■ Support for prisoners		
Barnardo's HMP Low Newton	■ Domestic violence course – Partners for Protection	2006	Two courses in 2006 – looking for more funding
Open Gate HMP Low Newton	■ Mentoring prisoners in prison and on return to the community	2005	
Time for Families HMP Durham	■ Relationship course	2006	Eight times a year
Adoption Society HMP Low Newton	■ Adoption support and information		

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BOX 5.1 Contact a Family

Contact a Family provides a mutual support service to the parents and families of children with disabilities. Contact a Family does not use criteria to determine a child's disability and consequently it offers services for people with disabilities which have no support group in the UK. The organisation covers the whole range of disabilities, from rare genetic disorders, to birth trauma-related disabilities to the entire range of behavioural disabilities. The latter are a collection of disabilities that are commonly experienced by offenders and the families of offenders. A recent study¹¹ indicated that 20% of prisoners had a 'hidden' disability and an additional 30% had learning difficulties.

Contact a Family's Development Officer said *"Autism, OCD, ADHD, behavioural, disorders ... all can cause impulsive behaviour, a desperate need for friends and to impress, being easily led, for excitement which doesn't come from the classroom and very susceptible to peer pressure"*. Children with behavioural disabilities have a higher propensity to engage in criminal behaviour.

The early identification of such disabilities is important if they are to be effectively addressed and understood through family intervention. Unfortunately, people with behavioural disabilities are not being identified until very late or if at all. The Development Officer said *"their parents live in fear of their children getting into trouble with the Police ... and the Police or Prison staff won't know how to handle someone with ADHD, for example that they need their Ritalin"*.

Contact a Family is at the periphery of the Pathway work as it has not directly provided services explicitly to the families of prisoners, although this group may have accessed their services. However, its work is of a direct relevance to prisoners' families as this group is likely to have a high proportion of children with disabilities. The organisation's support role is likely to have an impact on reducing re-offending.

Contact a Family's Development Officer felt that the FSSP was relevant to their work, although she said *"in a covert way ... it's [services for families of prisoners] not a primary focus for us but one we would like to develop"*. They said that they would like to do some education work with Police and Probation in order to develop an understanding of children and young people with behavioural disabilities. The organisation's services also have relevance for prison visits, particularly as children with disabilities will face particular difficulties whilst visiting, for example, problems with waiting.

11 The Dyslexia Institute and the Learning and Skills Council, 2005, *The Incidence of Hidden Disabilities in the Prison Population*.

BOX 5.2 Parentline Plus

Parentline Plus offers support to parents and carers without criteria and without limits. It provides one-to-one support, group work and runs a 24-hour phone line. Parentline has no history of working with offenders or families of offenders and has no specific department which offers that service; instead it extends its services to any parent or carer.

Parentline began working in HMP Durham and HMP Low Newton Visitor Centres in 2005 and 2006 respectively, after being approached by NEPACS, who said that its services were greatly needed in a visitor centre environment. Here the organisation works approximately two and a half days a week offering informal and unstructured support to the families that use the centres. Much of the work is listening, emphatic and emotional support although there is also a large amount of signposting. In relation to the impact Parentline has, the Support Worker said *“you can tell what effect you’re having because when people are in the visitor centres they are angry about something and after talking to you they feel happy and are smiling”*. Based on the existing research, this is a major achievement, as visiting is such a stressful experience, that any calming influence can only be a good thing to all of those involved.

Parentline also works in HMP Durham and has run a series of parenting courses with prisoners. These courses are delivered over four sessions lasting three hours each. Its courses in the community last longer but the organisation has to reduce the hours to fit in with the prison regime. However, Parentline has not worked at HMP Durham since summer 2006 as a planned course in September was cancelled when a Prison staff work to rule was imposed and the Family Links Workers in the prison had to return to normal duties. The Support Worker said *“it took ages to get into the prison ... there was always something, but then we went to the Family Forum meetings and then Kay [the Family Links worker] came on and she was great, and Helen and Marco [other Family Links workers]”*.

Parentline wants to carry on working in the prison but its continued presence relies upon authorisation from the security department and psychology. It seems that its work is hampered by the prison system, for example, the organisation received 40 applications from prisoners to participate in the courses, but only eight participated after the remaining 32 were rejected on security grounds.

Parentline says that a great need is the provision of services for children visiting prisoners as they see much distress and issues that need addressing. The Support Worker said *“we lack the expertise to work with children ... we only work with adults”*. They also said that they would like to work with partners and prisoners together as this would be particularly effective, but the prisons say that this would be too difficult to organise.

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5.3 The strengths and weaknesses of the Pathway

Strengths

- Networking and information: the VCS members of the Pathway report that it has been an extremely useful opportunity for agencies who work with families and children both within and without the Criminal Justice System to get together and share information. One agency lead said *“The meetings are very informative and extremely important for communication between agencies working in the field and bringing them together”*. Although it would appear that the Pathway represents a greater advantage to the smaller VCS agencies which do not have access to the information or resources associated with larger VCS organisations. It was also felt that the Pathway would reduce the likelihood of duplication of services as a result of the sharing of information.
- It was felt that the Pathway was a *“new creation”* as it provides a forum (via the meetings, the membership and associated membership) for the VCS organisations involved both in family support for prisoners and in the Criminal Justice System. This was something that was felt to have never happened before and was seen as a very positive development.
- The Pathway demonstrates the intention of the ROM to work with the VCS and this was extremely encouraging. One agency said *“reaching out to the VCS was very good”*.
- The Pathway reinforces the VCS’s work within the prison estate. It was noted that *“there is someone with responsibility for the work of the VCS in the prison but they are often given this role on top of everything else, so it gets the back seat”*. The Pathway demonstrates the importance of work in this area on a strategic level which has the potential to be translated into practice.
- It was noted that the administration for the Pathway was *“incredibly efficient”* and it was stated *“we always get what we ask for”*.

Weaknesses

- Some members were unclear of their role in the Pathway and were keen to see terms of reference or a clarification about their purpose there.
- Some agencies stated that they lacked the capacity to be involved in the Pathway in a meaningful way. In many ways these are similar problems that affect VCS organisation's involvement in policy and strategy development generally; they have such limited resources and they focus almost entirely on service delivery. One agency said it was given the opportunity to be involved in the action planning process, but lacked the time and resources. It said *"in theory yes we were involved but in practice no"*.
- One agency felt that it was predominantly a VCS Pathway and participation from the Prison and Probation Service is very weak. However, it was noted that *"this may reflect the recognition that the solutions lie outside the prison"*.
- It was identified that the next six months is a critical time for the Pathway and VCS involvement i.e. if the Delivery Plan is not seen to be delivered or support is not demonstrated, then the significant amount of investment and participation from the VCS will fall.

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5.4 Objectives contained in other regions' Children and Families Delivery Plans and Strategies (2006/07)

The following table reviews the other NOMS regions' strategic objectives that are contained within their Family and Social Support Pathways. As can be seen there are many different objectives across all regions, but the four most popular objectives are all contained within the North East's FSSP.

Objective	No. of regions	Region
Map existing resources, including Information, advice and guidance, for offenders families and supply these resources through identified point to families	6	Wales, South East (SE), London, East of Engl., East Midlands (EM), NE
Establish best practice in work with children, young people and families and share findings	4	Wales, SE, North West (NW), NE
Ensure visitor facilities, including visitor centres and visits areas, are resourced and are child-friendly	4	SE, Yorkshire and Humberside (Y&H), EM, NE
Establish systems to ensure information about a prisoner's family circumstances is understood at all points (from capture to release)	3	Wales, SE, NE
Promote needs of children and families through local Children and Young People's Plans (and LAAs)	3	SE, London, NW
Improve the quality and quantity of education for prisoners (especially parent craft and family relationships)	3	Wales, SE, EM

Objective	No. of regions	Region
Involve families in sentence planning, resettlement plans, and evaluate and spread good practice	2	SE, NE
Promote good practice in referrals from Criminal Justice System (CJS) agencies to support services, e.g. Sure Start, and improve shared understanding amongst agencies	2	SE, EM
Ensure staff attitudes are child and family friendly	2	SE, East of Engl.
Make available information about ways to maintain family contact to families	2	SE, London
Promote family issues at every stage of the CJS, particularly at reception, induction and through offender management	2	SE, East of Engl.
Increase opportunities for offenders and their families to maintain links (e.g. family days, assisted visits, story book dads)	2	SE, NE
Ensure provision of Children's Act 2004, the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Directions and Guidance on Extending Entitlement 2000 are understood and put in place with links into prisons, probation and other service providers	2	Wales, EM
Support the VCS via mainstreaming	1	NE
Review the effectiveness of the VCS Coordinator in prisons	1	NE
Work to include children and families targets in SLAs and LAAs	1	Y&H

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Objective	No. of regions	Region
Develop materials to help prisoners' families and children understand the CJS	1	SE
To consider support for families of offenders serving community sentences	1	London
To engage with all relevant statutory agencies (e.g. Connexions, Social Services, Children's Centres) to work with the Pathway	1	London
Work to locate prisoners closer to home	1	Wales
Work with families where there is more than one offender in the family, particularly PPOs, to reduce anti-social behaviour in the family	1	Y&H
Increase provision of domestic violence programmes in prison and in the community	1	Y&H
Increase number of family liaison posts in prisons	1	NW
Develop a training resource aimed at education and welfare professionals to raise awareness of the issues faced by children of offenders	1	London
Ensure services are available to all (diversity and equal opps).	1	SE
Review other pathways to identify links	1	SE
Improve links between CJS and Local Authorities in relation to high risk offenders	1	SE
Promote family issues in offender management policy	1	SE

6 Lessons from other Strategic Pathways

Each Pathway is very different in nature, context and membership. Some Pathways are predominantly made up of the Prison and the Probation Service, others have mixed memberships; some Pathways have 'piggy-backed' onto existing groups and others are newly constituted.

The Pathways have been evolving and developing since their inception in 2005. There were several comments from Pathway leads about their development being slow, and comments such as "*it was some time before it took off*" were common. However, considering that meetings are only held on a quarterly basis and the RRAP is only two years old, the production of the Pathway delivery plans represents reaching relative maturity in a reasonably short time.

The following observations were made about the Pathways.

- The **ETE Pathway** is part of an existing Learning and Skills Council-led strategic group (see Box 6.2) and has strong representation from the VCS and other non-statutory agencies. This Pathway is led by the Learning and Skills Council.
- The **Health and Social Care Pathway** was a newly constituted group and involves the VCS through representatives who sit on the Pathway and who work with the VCS in their other roles. This Pathway is led by Care Services Improvement Partnership's Health and Social Care in Criminal Justice Lead North East, Yorkshire and Humber – a post funded by the Health Authority.
- The **Life Skills and Offending Behaviour Pathway** replaced an existing regional meeting between the Prison and Probation Service which had been abandoned. There is no participation from the VCS as the Pathway focuses on specific accredited courses, such as domestic violence and sex offender programmes, and only the Prison and Probation Service are authorised to deliver such accredited courses (with the exception of NSPCC in Teesside). This Pathway is led by the Probation Service.
- The **Drugs Pathway** "*piggy backed onto other meetings*", namely the Regional Performance Management Drug Treatment Group and was never a group in its own right. A new Pathway lead was appointed in November 2006 and they will create a new structure which is planned

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to be in place by April 2007. This new Pathway will be an executive group which draws from the range of other drugs forums in the region, for example, the Drugs Commissioning Group and the Drug Interventions Programme Managers Group. The VCS generally has a good history of representation in the drugs field, but as the Pathway has not yet been constituted, it cannot be known. This Pathway is led by the National Treatment Agency.

- The **Alcohol Sub-Pathway** split from the Alcohol and Drugs Pathway in July 2006 in the light of the Alcohol Needs Assessment Research Project report that was commissioned by the Department of Health. The Pathway took some time to set up and required significant thought about how best to do so. To illustrate, the Pathway lead secured a seat on the Regional Alcohol Advisory Group and proposed the formation of a sub-group to look specifically at offender issues. This group also formed the new Alcohol Sub-Pathway and had its first meeting in early January. The VCS is involved with participation from VONNE and the North East Regional Alcohol Forum (which is a VCS forum). This Pathway is led by the ROM.
- The **Accommodation Pathway** has recently had a new lead who has reviewed the membership (as *“different professionals from the same organisation were turning up for each meeting and there was no focus”*) and re-focused activities through the delivery plan. The VCS is involved in the Pathway as it is a major provider of housing for ex-offenders (e.g. Norcare and Depaul Trust). Indeed, VCS agencies are the strongest partners in this Pathway and it is the statutory sector which needs support and encouragement to attend and commit. This Pathway is led by Government Office North East.
- The **Finance, Debt and Benefit Pathway** has been reviewed and the lead spent considerable time making sure membership was appropriate and relevant. The Pathway has identified a core membership (paying particular attention to the Probation Service) and an associate membership. The latter is particularly important as it provides other agencies, who may not need to be involved all of the time, an opportunity and mechanism to feed in, when necessary. They receive the minutes. This Pathway does not have a static membership; others will be called when there is a particular need. The VCS is well represented and the Pathway is led by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB – itself a major VCS agency) by the lead officer responsible for the CAB’s Offender Services Unit.

- The **Family and Social Support Pathway** has the highest VCS involvement of all the Pathways and is led by VONNE (Voluntary Organisations' Network North East). However, there is involvement from the Prison Service, Probation and the ROM. To populate the Pathway, they accessed the Prison Service's VCS Directory and contacted each agency on that list. They also contacted every member of VONNE. From this exercise, two lists emerged: organisations that were interested and would attend (core membership) and organisations who were interested but would not attend (associated membership (see section 5.0)). The Pathway members prioritised their Delivery Plan into three areas: visiting, information and support.

From discussions with all the Pathway leads, the following lessons can be learned.

- It is important that the right people are sitting round the table i.e. those who can speak for the organisations they represent, make decisions and action or resource those decisions.
- The members of the Pathway must be corporate representatives e.g. a Prison Service employee who sits on the group must represent the Prison Service as a whole and not just the individual establishment that they are from. This includes being able to make decisions or at least report quickly to, and receive authorisation from, someone with decision-making powers. This is the principal of delegated authority – see Box 6.1.
- The Pathway lead plays a critical role in the progress and impact of the Pathway. This role includes ensuring that the 'right people are round the table' and if they are not identifying who needs to be there and persuading them (if needs be) to become involved. One Pathway lead said *"this entails using the personal touch"* and another said *"it takes leg work ... making the effort to go see people and talk to them about what the Pathway is trying to achieve"*. One Pathway lead, who felt that the group was not representative at the start of their tenure, spent considerable time making sure the Pathway membership was appropriate and relevant and the right people *"who could make decisions were around the table"*. Another Pathway lead stated *"I didn't want people to come to the table if they couldn't do anything"*.

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- An associate membership is important as it provides agencies who do not need to be around the table, but who may play an occasional or peripheral role, with important information in relation to policy or service provision. It also allows agencies to become involved if occasion warrants it e.g. if they have a specific problem, issue or project which needs the involvement of key agencies. This associate membership is maintained via email.

Weaknesses

- There is no central fund held by the RRAP Board available in order to support the delivery of the Pathways. The Pathways can identify the priorities, for example a visitor centre at HMP Deerbolt, and the Board can attempt to identify funding streams and contribute to the justification for that priority. Eventually, the Board may be able to provide the case for changing the direction of funding streams in the commissioning process in the future via the SLA process. However, this is a weakness which other regions, for example Yorkshire and Humber, have overcome by providing a funding pot.
- Attendance has been an issue with several agencies, particularly with senior personnel not always attending the meetings. In relation to ensuring the involvement of the statutory sector in the Pathways, it is reported to be relatively straightforward with the Prison and Probation Service as they are simply instructed to attend by the ROM. However, with other statutory agencies such as the health service and local authorities, it is proving much more difficult to ensure their regular and sustained involvement. One proposed mechanism to attempt to do this is through LAAs and gaining agreement via the LAA for statutory inclusion in the reducing re-offending targets.
- There are some issues around the sharing of information; it was promised that the minutes of the Pathway meetings would be shared with other Pathways, but as yet this had not happened.
- Attendance at the Pathway Leads meeting has dropped off; it is critical for Delivery Plans to be actioned and the strategy to be realised, that all leads attend this meeting.
- Each Pathway needs terms of reference and an introduction (both for new and existing members).

BOX 6.1 Representation and delegated responsibility at the Pathways

Pathway leads shared many of the views of the Prison Service Area Manager about representation and delegated accountability. It was felt necessary that those who attended the Pathway meetings should represent the service to which they belong. It was stated that *“if there are two people from two different prisons, they should represent the Prison Service, not just their prisons”*. This was felt to be a cross-service issue. One lead continued *“you need accountability and you need a regional structure that enables delegated authority and responsibility”*. This is more difficult in relation to the Probation Service as its structure encompasses three area boards and three executive officers.

Suggestions for improvement

- One Pathway lead felt that the links between the Pathways need improvement, although all the Pathway leads attend a meeting (in principle) and the RRAP forum also brings representatives together. However, this research found that the links were reasonably strong through the above mechanisms and also through Pathway members attending other Pathway meetings. What may possibly be lacking is a formal structure to ensure that links are being made, followed up and actioned.
- One Pathway lead felt a Pathway leads ‘away-day’, where issues of partnership and cross-Pathway links can be discussed, would be very beneficial.
- One Pathway lead felt it would be good to have a mechanism for other agencies to feed into the other Pathways, should they wish to, particularly the smaller VCS organisations, such as the Holme House Visitor Centre Society.
- There is a need for clarity from the Strategic Board in relation to commissioning specific pieces of work, should they need to. Currently, it is not clear if this is possible and if it can be resourced. On an associated issue one of the Pathway leads felt that *“there has been no leadership from the Board”*.

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BOX 6.2 Case study of the Education, Employment and Training (ETE) Pathway, led by the Learning and Skills Council

In 2003, the Government decided that funding for the provision of education in prisons was to be transferred from the Home Office to the LSC¹². In January 2005, this process was started in three development regions of the North East, the North West and the South West and became operational in August 2005. The experiences of these three areas and how they secured provision for ETE in prisons were used as the basis for the other nine regions across the country who began a similar process in 2006. There are now National Offender Learning and Skills Service Boards (OLASS) in all regions across the country and it is these Boards that procure education and skills provision in the prison estate.

There are two types of provision in prisons: in-scope provision which receives funding from the LSC and concerns the provision of core services; and out-of-scope provision, which concerns non-core ETE activities (e.g. family support and education) that receive funding from other areas.

In the North East, the OLASS Board is now known as the ETE Board which reflects the maturity of the Board in the region and its recognition of the importance of ensuring that provision in prisons is aimed at giving offenders the skills they need to secure employment. The ETE Board is explicit about the need to provide qualifications and skills to offenders that will lead to jobs in the community. The ETE Board was set up by the LSC to include non-core businesses and partners (by a national directive), for example, ONE North East, the Federation of Small Businesses and the construction industry.

The ETE Pathway is part of the LSC's existing ETE Board and it is not a separate meeting. One person from the ETE Board has been nominated as the Pathway lead and reports to the ETE Board on progress. The reason for this is that the existing ETE Board carries out all of the core activities that would be expected of an ETE Pathway (as it was set up in January 2005 to procure ETE provision in prisons). It would appear that the activities of the LSC's ETE Board would have existed with or without the ETE Pathway, as an objective of the Board is to reduce re-offending through provision of learning and skills.

¹² The LSC's strategic priorities are driven by Sector Skills Councils, that were set up in 2002 by the Department for Education and Skills. Their role is to identify employer's skills needs, match these with appropriate qualifications and inform the LSC, who then procures providers.

There is an Employer Engagement Strategy Group which exists as a sub-group (a separate meeting) of the ETE Board (and Pathway) and meets to engage with key employment sector representatives around engaging with ex-offenders. One of its current activities is securing capital funding to build a call centre simulation in HMP Low Newton to train prisoners in call centre operation and administration. Another of its activities created a Energy and Utilities Skills programme in HMP Acklington and has resulted in at least three prisoners having secured employment before leaving prison.

As a consequence of the ETE Board being set up to provide core ETE services to prisons (since January 2005), the Pathway lead feels that it is already a very well established Pathway.

There has been has a significant amount of activity through the Pathway (though arguably this would have been delivered anyway) and there are four elements in the Delivery Plan: two specific to OLAS and two to ETE.

The main link to other Pathways is primarily to the Finance, Debt and Benefits Pathway via representatives that sit on both Pathway meetings, for example, Job Centre Plus. The Pathway lead states that there may be links to the Family and Social Support Pathway on an operational level and on an individual basis, for example, one of the elements in the Delivery Plan is the production of an ETE Resettlement Pack for Offenders. Once this has been drafted, they will share it with other Pathways and see if it requires input and further development, for example, if part of the pack is aimed at women, there may be childcare needs that require specification and provision.

The Pathway also links to others through the Pathway leads meeting. This mechanism allows feedback and input from those with considerable experience of the prison sector and informs developments within the Pathway. The Pathway lead stated *"because we have limited experience in prisons ... if we think something that we see as sensible, someone from the other Pathways can come back and say that couldn't happen in a custodial environment"*.

7 Strategy into operation: The Example of HMP Durham

HMP Durham is a local prison holding approximately 950 prisoners. The average stay of a prisoner is 90 days. Durham houses prisoners and those on remand on a mixed basis i.e. there are no specific wings for remand and convicted prisoners.

The prison has a series of activities and initiatives that do much to cater for the needs of prisoners in relation to family and social support. It also has very encouraging future plans which in many regards translate the strategic development of the ROM's Reducing Re-offending Strategy into operational practice. It has also developed its own effective assessment tool to be used in addition to OASys.

HMP Durham currently carries out the following activities.

- The prison has three family links workers: one is present on the wings every day and at least one is available on the weekends. These workers provide a point of contact for families of prisoners and for prisoners who have concerns about their families. The direct phone numbers of these workers are given to every family in the information that they receive. The leaflet states 'Part of our role is to help prisoners and their families with problems, worries or concerns they may have about family issues during their time at HMP Durham'.
- It provides an information pack for families of new prisoners which includes details of the family links workers, NEPACS, Parentline Plus, Sure Start, Time for Families and Action for Prisoners Families and the number of a prisoners' family helpline.
- Father and Child visits are available twice a month to every prisoner who meets the criteria. Sessions run from approximately 10:00am to 11:30am in an area specifically tailored for family visiting, with toys and where fathers can play with their children. Prisoners will not be considered suitable for the Father Child visits if: there is current relevant drug-related intelligence on the prisoner; there is current drug-related intelligence on the visitor; the prisoner is subject to Closed Visits; the visitor is subject to

Banned or Closed visits; they are not on standard or enhanced behaviour status; they have been in the prison less than one month. All prisoners, including remand, trial and convicted, are eligible for the visits. There are currently approximately eight fathers on each visit (giving a total of 16 fathers each month). Children up to the age of 18 years can visit and the carer brings the child(ren) and stays for the first ten minutes and collects the children and stays for the last ten minutes, thereby allowing additional family contact. During school holidays, these visits are extended to 1:30pm and give the fathers an opportunity to have lunch with their children and their carers (carers come in at 11:30am).

- Parentline Plus, a national charity, has workers that sit in the visitor centre just outside the prison and offer support to the families, if they need it. These workers are available at the time of the Father and Child visits. Parentline Plus also provides six parenting courses per year (which began in 2005) and which are delivered over five sessions and these are available to anyone who is a father.
- The prison has put on two Christmas parties which are similar opportunities to the Father and Child visits (but additional) and where the prisoners are given presents to give to their children. Carers are also allowed to attend the parties. At Christmas 2006, a total of 15 fathers and a total of 20 children participated in the parties.
- There is a Christmas carol service at the Chapel where families can come in and sing at Christmas time.
- The prison ran the Father's Inside course twice and this was delivered by the education department. This is a six- to eight-week course which is delivered by trained education staff. The prison would like to do this more but there are issues in relation to budgets and ownership. Work is underway to resolve issues in this area.
- In January 2007 the prison started Storybook Dads, with funding from the Prince's Trust and through the efforts of one prisoner. This initiative enables fathers to record stories onto compact disc, with editing equipment, and to give them to their children to listen to at home.
- Time for Families is a relationship course delivered by a charity of the same name. It was delivered in the prison eight times in 2006 and it is planned for a similar number in 2007.

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- Family Friendly Weeks, which were set up by Action for Prisoners Families, and are occasions where NEPACS provides food and activities in the visitor centre, allow children to bring in mounted photographs and other items for their fathers. They ran one of these in 2005 and two in 2006.
- They have a Family Services Forum which meets in the visitor centre and discusses family provision in the prison.

Durham has developed their own assessment tool (see appendix four) which sits below OASys and captures offender needs (corresponding to the seven Pathways) and provides scores on these, similar to OASys. This includes relatively detailed information on a prisoner's family, including whether they have any dependent children. On the basis of this assessment tool (which is carried out on reception, then updated after six weeks), the prisoner is referred to other agencies or departments within the prison, e.g. drugs workers or family links workers, and a sentence plan is drawn up. The activity allocation panel in the prison will also use this assessment to allocate activities to the prisoner. Durham carries out this assessment on all prisoners, including remand.

Future plans

Although Durham currently does not have a pre-discharge area, there are plans to develop a specific wing (F wing) which will be devoted to pre-discharge and reduction of re-offending activities. This wing has its own visiting area (currently being described as a 'relationship area'). If a prisoner is experiencing family problems, the intention is that this area can be used for extended family contact, negotiation and mediation. Plans are being progressed to deliver an enhanced family links service in the area which will, hopefully, be fully operational by mid-2007.

The intention is to have all offender need pathways present and available on this wing i.e. family support, drug and alcohol services, employment and accommodation etc. The relationship area will be staffed by a team of four: three family links officers (Prison Officers) and one Probation Officer (the team leader). There is also a proposal to employ a drugs links worker who will work with prisoners and their families where drug abuse issues have been identified. For example, if a drug dependent prisoner has stopped

using drugs in prison but is worried that he will begin drug taking again when he returns to his family, as his partner is also drug dependent, then the drugs links worker can work with the prisoner and family in prison, working on areas such as health, education, prevention and withdrawal and identifying further services in the community.

The wing will accommodate a total of 120 prisoners (both remand and convicted, short and long term). Approximately half of the wing will hold well-behaved, mature prisoners to help maintain stability. The other half of the wing population will be there specifically for help in addressing their resettlement needs (as identified through their assessments as previously mentioned). The population split on the wing will be varied to reflect the needs of prisoners and the wider management needs of the wing.

In summary, in order to make best use of the available resources, if a prisoner has an identified offender (Pathway) need and a targeted intervention plan they may be housed on this specialised wing where they will be helped to address those needs.

The intention is to develop an integrated system that will identify problems, help the prisoner address those problems and make available a caseworker to support the prisoner through this process.

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Future needs of the voluntary and community sector

This research has identified that the VCS has support needs to continue engaging with the FSSP specifically and, more generally, the reduction of re-offending agenda. It does not appear that the ROM's budget will be sufficient to cover the support or delivery needs of the VCS and so other areas will need to be identified. As the individual VCS agencies are already under pressure with their core services, this research has identified a need for a VCS coordinator.

The 2005–2006 Clinks Regional Information and Skills Project (CRISP) supported VCS organisations working with, or interested in working with, offenders and their families by providing networking and information sharing opportunities. In many ways CRISP started a process of consolidation within the VCS in this field; making voluntary sector agencies aware of the work of others (both VCS and statutory) whilst providing regular updates on the development of NOMS. Although CRISP did not lead to many new projects or services for offenders being developed or provided, it did indicate the possibilities to many VCS organisations and provided ideas for future work. It also made the VCS aware that NOMS (and therefore the ROM) wanted to work more closely with it to improve service delivery to offenders and their families. Clinks continues to maintain this network through the e-bulletin, Light Lunch.

Some foundations within the VCS have therefore been made, and it is the view of this research that support for the VCS working with offenders and their families should move beyond a networking role and focus on supporting the VCS to develop projects in partnership with the ROM, and to identify funding for these projects. Funding sources are limited through the ROM, but they do exist within the Probation Service (see below), Crime and Disorder Reducation Partnerships (CDRPs) and the charitable sector. VCS support would enable such sources to be identified and, through partnership, identify matched funding streams.

It is one of the ROM's priorities to improve the involvement of the VCS in all of the Pathways and in key service delivery. The Probation Service is particularly weak at involving the VCS in its delivery (a target exists for the probation service of ensuring at least 5% of its service delivery comes from

non-statutory agencies, i.e. the VCS or the private sector in 2006/07 (to rise to 10% in 2007/08)). The region's Probation Services currently commission around 3% from non-statutory services and so are failing in this target.

A VCS offender coordinator would also help ensure that the VCS is effectively integrated into the work of the ROM and the RRAP. It was felt by the VCS that *"there has been a lot of goodwill from the VCS to NOMS but that is going to run out soon"*. A coordinator would not simply ensure representation on the Pathways or the Board, but would play a more profound supporting role which would include: the identification of VCS agencies who can support the RRAP, either those who are not currently involved or those that could play a greater role; and the identification of funding streams to support and enhance VCS involvement in the RRAP.

There was a general worry amongst the Pathways about smaller VCS organisations who may *"die in the commissioning process ... they need support to continue engaging as they are too busy doing their job"*. It was noted that the funding stream available through NOMS is meagre and puts the region's VCS in a precarious position. For example, when NEPACS applies to the charitable sector for core funding a common response is that NEPACS services should be funded through the prison service and when the prison service is approached, it says its budgets have been cut to such an extent that they do not have financial resources to spare.

A coordinating role would not exclusively support the smaller VCS agencies but also support the work of the more established and robust VCS organisations. For example, Barnardo's has significant experience in provision for families and children (particularly in Northern Ireland) and a very good associated reputation, and many regional prisons and visitor centres would welcome its involvement. However it lacks the funds and resources to be able to deliver services. Thus, Barnardo's would welcome the support of someone who could identify additional finance streams or partnership working opportunities.

An example of a supporting role is the development of an idea by a small VCS agency for a mentoring programme for offenders who have recently returned to their families in the community. A coordinator *"would really help"*, it says, in developing this idea and bringing it to fruition. An additional benefit that such a role would bring is knowledge of NOMS and the prison, as the agency's

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knowledge of the prison system is limited. It stated “going into prisons is new to us”. This introduces the point that many VCS organisations with the potential to help offenders and their families are reluctant as they are unfamiliar with the prison system.

It is well recognised that local authorities and CDRPs are absent from the custodial process (prison and probation, and work around the reduction of re-offending). A comment from one Pathway lead reflects the position of many in the Pathways that *“we have given up on people from the local authorities”*. There is a new potential via the LAAs, which contain targets on reducing re-offending, to bring local authorities and CDRPs closer to the work of CJS agencies. For example, there is potential within the LAAs to provide support services to the children and families of offenders within local authority boundaries. In order to identify these groups, it will be necessary to work with the Prison and Probation Services. Currently, the VCS (which would be the obvious delivery agent to families and children) does not have the resources and time to negotiate with CDRPs or local authorities in order to identify funding opportunities. A VCS offender coordinator could play such a role and contribute towards reducing the VCS reliance on the NOMS commissioning process.

It would make sense that a VCS offender coordinator would be located at the regional voluntary sector infrastructure body, VONNE, not least because of its good and well-established relationship with the ROM. Such a position would also fit well into VONNE’s aims, which include:

- to inform the VCS about issues impacting at the regional level;
- to support the active involvement of the sector in regional and national developments;
- to promote effective and beneficial partnerships within and between the sector and other sectors throughout the region;
- to ensure that the sector receives the support that it requires to play a full role in regional developments;
- to articulate the views and interests of the sector;
- to bridge the gap between the small community groups, larger voluntary organisations and regional policy makers.

9 Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Discussion

There has been much development in work around the reduction of re-offending in the North East since the original research was completed in 2005. There have also been some developments and improvements in the support available to parents in prison and their visiting families and children. The structure is in place and it now needs populating with agencies that, in partnership with the prisons, must be allowed to provide their services to prisoners and families.

Currently, there are two unmet needs within the region's prisons: the needs of prisoners to access services and opportunities to help them maintain relationships with their families, particularly their children; and the needs of visiting families and children to have meaningful and stress-free opportunities to spend time with their family member (parent or partner) and to receive support in the community.

The statutory sector is not best placed to provide these services but the VCS is, and it has the will and ability to do so, with one important caveat. Although the VCS has a champion in the form of the FSSP and the ROM, it lacks the resources to be able to provide services in a coordinated and consistent fashion. It says a lot when NEPACS, which provides most of the highly valued services to prisoners' families in the region cannot meaningfully engage with the FSSP work because it currently lacks the funding for a coordinator.

Engagement of, and support for, the VCS in work to reduce re-offending in partnership with ROM is critical. On an individual prison basis, this engagement and support is, in principle, provided by the VCS Coordinator. The strength or weakness of VCS involvement in an establishment is dependent on the Coordinator. However, throughout this research, this role has been identified in many cases as being inadequate and ineffective. It has been said that the individual Prison Officer has this role placed upon them on top of a multitude of other tasks and that the position is not placed with a sufficiently senior prison grade.

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In summary, the strategic structure for work with prisoners and families to reduce re-offending is there, the relationship with the Prison Service is getting there because of the commissioning process but the content is not yet there, because of the lack of capacity within the VCS. It therefore becomes clear that this lack of capacity requires attention and support, and it is proposed here that this is best done with the appointment of a resource and coordinating person, rather than a regional network.

9.2 Conclusions

- The RRAP has evolved and matured and there is evidence of significant developments which connect strategy to operation, although there remains a long way to go before the work is fully embedded within the custodial estate and the community.
- Support and services for the families of prisoners and parents in prison in the North East are few and desperately need improving. It is recognised that without the dedicated work of NEPACS, then support to families would be almost non-existent.
- There are examples of good practice in relation to work with the families and children of prisoners in certain prisons in the North East, e.g. HMP Durham, including the use of an assessment tool which is significantly more useful than OASys. These examples of good practice need to be shared and built upon and put into a framework, which ultimately the FSSP is attempting to achieve.
- Some of the recommendations of the original research report have been addressed in certain prisons involved in the research (e.g. HMP Holme House).
- Support work and interventions around the support and maintenance of relationships needs to be available to all prisoners and not just the well-behaved. Arguably, the prisoners with most need for support are those which would not stand a chance of accessing it because of the criteria.
- The concerns of the Prison Service are being addressed by the ROM and its commissioning process. In many respects, this research will act as a benchmark and baseline to monitor progress in future years.
- It is not clear whether work with prisoners around supporting relationships has any impact in reducing re-offending because there is an absence of evaluation. For example, there is no evidence to suggest that parenting programmes or family links work has an impact. It is therefore strongly recommended that evaluation in these areas is resourced.

- A VCS offender coordinator would be highly valued by the VCS agencies involved in the FSSP and would support the integration of the VCS into the work of the ROM. There would be many advantages to all sectors, including the Prison and Probation Services, the VCS, families and children and prisoners, from such an appointment. It is proposed that a VCS offender coordinator would serve the VCS's interests on all of the Pathways, with a particular focus on the FSSP. If an initial funding source can be found for this post, and if impact can be demonstrated, then the ROM has expressed an interest in mainstreaming such a position with the advent of full commissioning.

9.3 Recommendations

Based on the research, four recommendations are made below. Three of these will directly impact on the level and quality of support that is received by the families of prisoners and parents in prison (although not exclusively as there will be other beneficiaries). The remaining recommendation will provide clarity, direction and information to the Pathways.

- A VCS offender coordinator post should be created to fulfil a range of functions, including project development, identification of funding and partnership working, driving the FSSP Delivery Plan, strategic representation of the VCS and ensuring the integration of the VCS in the other RRAP Pathways.
- Terms of reference should be created for each Pathway, including introductory information for new members.
- Each Pathway should create an associate membership which receives agendas, minutes and associated material and has the opportunity to participate.
- There should be a review of the VCS coordinator in each prison; the minimum grade for such a post should be Principal Officer. In addition to this role, which provides day-to-day support for the VCS in the prison (and community), an additional strategic role should be created, at Governor grade, to represent the VCS on the prison's Senior Management Team meeting. This latter role would also negotiate Service level agreements and award contracts.

Appendix one

Methodology

The methods used in this research include:

- interviews with all the Pathway leads;
- interviews with VCS agencies who are members of the FSSP;
- telephone interviews with members of Children and Families Pathways from around the country;
- interviews with senior staff from the Prison Service and the ROM;
- distribution of the research report to over 150 national agencies and academics involved in work with families and prisoners and analysis and incorporation of their comments;
- distribution of the research report to prisons where the original research took place and the incorporation of comments;
- review of national and regional strategy and research documents.

Appendix two

Strategic Pathway 4: children and families at HMP Holme House

Enable offenders to maintain and develop positive relationships with their family, partners and their home communities.

Stages and Processes	Development Issues	Responsibility	Proposed Comp. Date
<p>Before custody</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families and significant others kept informed of developments before and during an offender's imprisonment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide accurate information about HMP Holme House to be available to prisoners and their families in the courts, at point of arrest through the police and through the Probation Service. This information will be in a format which addresses a variety of language and disability needs. This information will include: visiting arrangements; regime information; travel directions and financial help. 	<p>PO Featherstone</p>	<p>April 2007</p>
<p>During custody</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits available to all offenders, and reception/visits information available to all visitors, to enable offenders to maintain close and meaningful relationships with family and friends, whilst taking account of security needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a comprehensive project to review how we manage visitors to the prison. Project will run from November to March & will be taken forward by a multi-agency project team including representation from the VCS. Protocols will be developed & implemented in April 2007. 	<p>Head of Resettlement</p>	<p>April 2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support groups for families/partners supported by agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a weekly Family Visits session for fathers and children. During the father/child visit support groups for mothers/careers will be run in the Visitors Centre. These support sessions will include working with & developing existing links with VCS support schemes available in the community. 	<p>Governor A Walker</p>	<p>April 2007</p>

Stages and Processes	Development Issues	Responsibility	Proposed Comp.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Information provided to visitors/families and communicate clearly and sensitively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plasma TV now installed in Visitors Centre along with a CAB Kiosk. Need to develop awareness of both & ensure full use is made of this technology to keep families informed of prison activities ■ Particularly resettlement activities. 	Governor A Walker	March 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Families included in Sentence Planning review process where practical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Resettlement Needs Analysis completed in 2006 identified that very few prisoners knew what their own sentence plan targets were & even fewer said that they had shared these targets with their families. During 2007 HMP Holme House will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Provide a copy of sentence plan targets (with the offenders consent) to be completed in custody or in the community to all prisoners under the scope of OM □ Invite the families of prisoners accommodate on HB 5 to attend the post discharge OASys review. 	Head of OM	December 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Needs of minority ethnic groups recognised within visits arrangements and support systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that results of the annual Race Equality Visitors Survey are discussed at the RPC & an action plan is put in place to address areas of concern ■ Visiting arrangements & policies are to be impact assessed in 2007-08. 	Governor A Walker	December 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initiatives established to maintain family ties/partnerships. ■ Family and parenting behaviour directly trained within regime provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct a review of the current Family Learning taking into consideration issues identified in the Resettlement Needs Analysis & make recommendations for improvements to the strategic RPC. 	Sheena Maberly	April 2007

Stages and Processes	Development Issues	Responsibility	Proposed Comp. Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to develop current library projects such as Superdad’s and children’s story telling in Visitors Centre. Work is already underway to build effective working relationships with Sure Start & introduce some community projects to the prison. 	Sheena Maberly/ Librarians	July 2007
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Following on the success of our Action for Prisoners Families event in October 2006, plan to run similar family focused events during 2007–08 including more drama productions. 	Education Manager/ NEPACS	April 2007
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop New Bridge Family Matters course during 2007–08 to provide peer support workers to co-facilitate training alongside New Bridge staff. 	Pete Walker	April 2007
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Draw up a funding bid to increase the Visitors centre to allow us the space & opportunity to offer a more comprehensive support service to the local community & to prisoners families. 	Andrea Walker	April 2007
<p>After custody</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community support available for offenders without families. ■ Families informed about release arrangements and consulted where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop portfolio of local VCS services and support. Ensure that this directory is included on the CAB kiosk information where possible. 	Librarians/ VSC Co-ordinator	July 2007

Appendix three

An example of a delivery plan: *Reducing Re-offending – The North East Regional Resettlement Strategy*, Strategic Pathway 4: Family and Social Support

Aim – Enable offenders to maintain and develop positive relationships with their families, partners and their home community

Key Deliverables 2006/2007	
1. Information Strategy	To ensure that information about offenders’ family circumstances is captured systematically at all points within the Criminal Justice System and examine barriers to information sharing
2. Mapping of Family Services	Ensuring that the needs of the children and families of offenders are met. Supporting the transition from custody into the community and recognising the importance of positive relationships between agencies and families in this process.
3. Family support & Life Skills strategy	To ensure that there is adequate provision of family support programmes such as “Family Man” “Fathers Inside” Etc. across the prison estate and that VCS organisations such as Parentline Plus & Relate are able to work with offenders and their families to address some of the relationship issues that form a barrier to successful resettlement.

NB: There are an additional two pages (after the following page) which outline the Key Deliverables of: **Mapping of Family Services** and **Family Support and Life Skills Strategy**.

Aim – Enable offenders to maintain and develop positive relationships with their families, partners and their home community

1. Information Strategy: To ensure that information about offenders’ family circumstances is captured systematically at all points within the criminal justice system and examine barriers to information sharing.

Milestone	Time-scale	Pathway Links	Progress to date and constraints	Recommendations to the Strategic Board	Responsible individual
a) Carry out a review of the quality and content of information recorded in the relationships section of OASys and Asset, to create systems which include mechanisms to record information on caring responsibilities and an action plan to ensure the safety and care of family members during custody of an offender.	6 months			To improve information collation. MK	Kevin Dawson – Prison Info systems and Stuart McPhillips – Probation info systems
b) Promote the importance of gathering accurate family related information within the Criminal Justice System.	9 months		to follow from OASys review		Probation Chief Officers and Prison Governors, Mike Kirby
c) Using the NACRO report “Keeping Families Together” carry out a benchmarking exercise on dialogue between families of offenders and the Criminal Justice Agencies to identify barriers, with the aim to develop an effective two-way protocol to ensure that all parties are kept up to date with the offender management process.	3 months		Existing report to be reviewed and updated	NOMS to identify funding for report review	Chris Hartworth, NOMS

Milestone	Time-scale	Pathway Links	Progress to date and constraints	Recommendations to the Strategic Board	Responsible individual
<p>d) Develop a prison induction process for families new to prison visiting. All visitors centres will be able to supply family information packs on reception and initial visit.</p>	<p>12 months</p>	<p>All pathways</p>	<p>building on existing systems in Visitors Centres and developing a consistent and family focused approach</p>	<p>NOMS to identify funding available for delivery</p>	<p>NEPACS & Holme House Visitors Centre, Prison Service, Mike Kirby</p>
<p>e) Develop an exit strategy which will enable families to be included in the development of resettlement plans; ensuring good awareness among staff working in the field of resettlement of support organisations that can assist offenders and their families. Carry out an OASys assessment pre-release to include family needs, which can be addressed via appropriate signposting and engagement with local VCS service deliverers.</p>	<p>12 months</p>	<p>All pathways</p>		<p>To identify VCS Coordinators in all prisons, develop consistent roles and responsibilities, and a protocol for VCS Liaison (links to 2a)</p>	<p>NOMS & VCS Liaison, VONNE & Local Development Agencies</p>

Appendix four

HMP Durham's initial assessment document

Section 6 – Offender Manager Details			
1 Probation Officer/Offender Manager			
2 Probation Office			
Section 7 – Accommodation Needs			
1 What type of accommodation did you have prior to coming into prison?	Owner occupier		
	Privately rented		
	Council		
	Hostel		
	Staying with friends or relatives		
	Housing association		
	No fixed abode		
	Other		
2 Can you return to this accommodation on release?	Y	N	
If 'N' please give details			
3 Is rent being charged on this accommodation at present?	Y	N	
4 Do you receive housing benefit for the property?	Y	N	
5 Is the property occupied at the present?	Y	N	
6 Are there any issues about the property's security?	Y	N	
If 'Y' please give details			
7 Housing Officer referral required?	Y	N	

Section 8 – Health Needs		
1 Do you suffer from a physical or mental health problem that would prevent you from taking part in any of the listed activities?	Education	
	Group Work	
	Gym	
	Workshops	
	Wing work	
	Cell work	
Any '✓' give details:		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
2 Do you suffer from any mobility problems?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details:		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
Section 9 – Employment, Enterprise, Learning and Skills		
1 Prior to coming into prison were you in employment?	Y	N
If 'N' go to question 4.		
2 Will you be able to keep your job while in prison?	Y	N
3 Do you need contact to be made with your employer?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details of employer:		
Name		
Address		
<hr/>		
Telephone		
Details of contact:		
<hr/>		
4 Do you intend to seek further employment, education or training on release from prison?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details:		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
5 Would you like advice on looking for a job?	Y	N

6	Do you feel that you need help with reading or writing?	Y	N
7	Were you involved with any skill or qualification training prior to coming into prison?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details:			
8	Would you like to undertake any learning or skills training while in prison?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details:			
9	Do you wish to have employment while you are in prison? (Remand prisoners only)	Y	N
Section 10 – Family and Social Support			
1	Were any children living with you before you came to prison?	Y	N
	Name	Age	Relationship
			Carer details
2	Are any of your children in the care of the Local Authority?	Y	N
3	Is your contact with your children restricted by a Court Order?	Y	N
4	Do you expect contact with family or friends through:	Visits	
		Telephone calls	
		Mail	
5	Is this your first time in HMP Durham?	Y	N
6	Do your family know that you are here?	Y	N
7	Is there anyone you would like a visitor's information pack to be sent to?	Y	N
If 'Y' give details:			
8	Do you need help to maintain contact with your family or friends?	Y	N
If 'Y' please give details:			
9	Family Links Officer referral required?	Y	N

Section 11 – Financial Management				
1 Were you receiving any of the following benefits immediately before coming into prison?	Jobseekers Allowance			
	Income Support			
	Incapacity Benefit			
	Pension			
	Working Families Tax Credit			
	Child Benefit			
	Other			
2 Have debt related issues contributed to you coming into prison?			Y	N
3 Would you like advice in dealing with debt and/or finance issues?			Y	N
4 Would you like the Prison Librarian to make you an appointment to see the Community Legal/Finance Advice Service on your release?			Y	N
5 What is your National Insurance Number?				
Section 12 – Drugs and Alcohol				
1 Do issues of drug misuse have anything to do with your current period of imprisonment?			Y	N
2 Do issues of alcohol misuse have anything to do with your current period of imprisonment?			Y	N
3 Do you expect to be suffering from withdrawal effects during your stay in HMP Durham?			Y	N

Section 13 – Life Skills and Offending Behaviour		
1 Do you have problems with any of the following issues or have any of them contributed to your current or previous offending issues?	Loss of temper/anger problems	
	Driving/motoring offences	
	Relationship problems	
	Alcohol misuse	
	Drug Misuse	
	Finding and or keeping a job	
	Budgeting	
2 Do you have problems comprehending spoken English?	Y	N
3 Would you like information about the English for Speakers of Other Languages course?	Y	N
4 Would you like to speak to someone who can give you more information about groups catering for the needs of prisoners from ethnic minorities?	Y	N
5 If sentenced to less than 12 months imprisonment and resident in Northumbria or County Durham, would you consider referral to the Community Integration Team?	Y	N
6 The following programmes were explained and handouts were issued:	Challenging Behaviour	
	Domestic Violence	
	Driving Awareness	
	Social Awareness	
	Alcohol and Offending	
	Anger Management	
	ESOL	
	PASRO	
Signed	(Section 6 to 13 Assessor)	
Date		

I come all this way to see my dad, the visiting is supposed to start at 2^o clock but you never get in until about 2:15 it's ridiculous for god sake I only get to see my dad twice a month. You should sort it out

I THINK THE MOTHER AND CHILDREN VISIT IS AN EXCELLENT EXPERIENCE JUST TO SEE ~~THE~~ ^{PARENTS} PLAYING WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND BEING ABLE TO GO AND SIT ANYWHERE

By Tom from Birmingham
Age 12

Comments from children of prisoners on feedback forms received from NEPACS visitor centres across the North East.

I think the childparent's visits
are nice and it gives me more
time to spend with my mother
And the visit centre looks
lovely with the flowers and
Rose is very kind!



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