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# Family learning in prisons

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A complete guide

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This book is dedicated to Helen McLachlan, family liaison officer at HMP Pentonville. Her instinctive understanding of family learning, her unstinting support, her gentle nudging and her dedication have inspired us all.

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# Introduction

The Family Learning Division of LLU+ at London South Bank University has been involved in running family learning in prisons and young offender institutions since 1999 when we were commissioned by the Home Office to set up and run two family learning projects, one with women at HMP Cookham Wood and the other with young men at HMYOI Dover. The success of this project led to further commissioned work from the Department for Education and Skills including a family learning project in 2005–2006 at HMP Latchmere House, HMP Pentonville and HMP Holloway. Further success culminated in a successful application to the Big Lottery for a three year family learning project, Best Start for Families, at HMP Holloway and HMP Pentonville.

When we started our first family learning in prisons project in 1999 very little family learning was taking place in prisons. We had to learn the hard way. This included having to leave half our materials outside the prison because they included prohibited items, having no understanding whatsoever of why it was difficult to set up a group with regular attenders etc. This book, we hope, goes some way to making it easier for all those who want to be involved in family learning in prisons. Its aim is to provide useful tools for the experienced family learning tutor who is starting work in a prison, for the prison officer who wants to enhance the quality of provision for families and for the staff employed by a wide range of organisations to work with prisoners and their families. We hope that the advice given will pave the way and begin to make family learning part of the core offer of every prison.

**Foufou Savitzky**

Head of Family Learning Division LLU+

London South Bank University

May 2011





# What is family learning?

## *Who this section will be of interest to:*

Anyone thinking of expanding their provision for families in a prison context, organisations working with parents in a prison and wanting to explore other ways of working, family liaison officers in prisons, staff in charge of family and children's visits in prisons, staff from museums and other organisations wanting to ensure that their provision in prisons does meet family learning criteria. It will also be of interest to family learning tutors wanting to do a bit of revision.

“Just sharing the changes that I’ve noticed over the last year of our family learning days. At the start of the year, I witnessed a lot of reservation from inmates simply when we used the term ‘family learning’ in relation to family days. In conversation with some of them it was apparent that ‘learning’ had negative associations which often came from their own formal learning experiences and was linked with their sense of ‘failure’. Subsequently some of the guys were afraid of looking stupid in front of their children. However, as the year has gone on inmates who have experienced more than one family day are always asking when the next one is and what the theme is. They are definitely far more keen to take part because they realise that family learning can be a lot of fun. Before family learning we used to have to spend quite a bit of time persuading dads (and sometimes mums as well) to engage with their children. Now it’s a very, very rare occurrence. I also think there’s a definite shift in how ‘learning’ is perceived in general amongst the men as a result.”

**Feedback from Carol Hayward** <sup>1</sup> worker at HMP Pentonville following a year of family learning activities during family days.

<sup>1</sup> Pact – Prison Advice and Care Trust which runs many visitors centre for prisons and supports prisoners and their families.

Family learning in the UK has developed out of the rich and vibrant history of adult education, adult literacy and early years education. Since the late 90s it has been well established in local education authorities throughout the country largely, but not by any means entirely, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) now replaced by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Other substantial funders include government funding devolved through local authorities or local education authorities funding, European funding bodies such as the European Integration Fund, UK agencies such as the Big Lottery and national and regional charities and grant awarding bodies.

Family learning activities and programmes take place in a wide range of settings including schools, children's centres, faith groups, hospitals, libraries, museums, sports centres, community centres and prisons.

Underpinning all quality family learning are the following principles:

- A belief that all parents<sup>2</sup> care about their children's education alongside a recognition that sometimes support is needed to enable them to value their own contribution to their children's progress.
- Respect for individuals where everyone's contribution is encouraged and acknowledged.
- Models are strengths-based, building on what parents and children already know and can do and their life experiences.
- Home languages are genuinely valued and the key role bilingualism can play in family and social cohesion as well as the individual child's social and mental well-being is recognised and explained.
- Programmes are flexible so that parents' and children's interests and concerns can be built into programmes.
- Individual ways of learning and accessing information are identified, discussed and catered for on programmes through the range of activities and resources provided.
- Adult activities and programmes allow for in-depth discussions in which peer learning and support plays a key role.
- The family learning environment is informal and non-threatening so that, not only children, but adults who do not see themselves as learners can have a positive experience of learning. This frequently leads to self-development and adults being empowered to explore new directions.
- Family learning is designed to engage learners in a range of practical activities that encourage reflection in a safe, non-judgemental learning environment.
- Whatever the context or topic, the methodology used for delivery creates enthusiasm and engagement in learning.

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<sup>2</sup> The word parents is used for ease of reading but should be understood to encompass any adult playing a role in bringing up a child. This could include grandparents, uncles and aunts, older siblings, foster carers etc.

The aims of family learning are wide-ranging but there are overarching aims common to all family learning:

- to provide opportunities for intergenerational learning
- to enable both adults and children to experience learning as a positive and enjoyable activity leading them to embrace further learning opportunities
- to provide opportunities for adults and children to develop their skills and knowledge
- to provide opportunities for parents to develop effective strategies for supporting their children's development
- to enable parents to understand the crucial role they play in their children's learning.

Additionally individual activities or programmes will have their own aims particular to their context or subject area.

Family learning can take the form of short one day workshops at which a range of activities are provided for families to take part in **together**, or a more structured course spanning a number of weeks focusing on particular topics or skills, e.g. *Best Start for Babies* a 90 hour programme delivered over 30 weeks for parents of babies under one with a focus on child development, healthy eating, weaning, first aid and a joint singing activity for parents and their babies.

The form and content of family learning programmes or activities is dependent on a variety of factors:

- Funders may have certain stipulations and reserve funding for the development of specific skills such as literacy, language and numeracy as in the case of most SFA funded provision.
- Identified local needs, e.g. *All About Baby*, a course developed by LLU+ for Hartlepool Borough Council, for parents of babies under six months old to comply with the Department of Health's national targets for children, young people and maternity services.
- Requests made by families themselves, e.g. parents having completed an *Understanding Nursery Education* course asking for a course to follow their children's next educational stage which resulted in the development of *Helping My Child with Reading and Writing*<sup>3</sup>.
- The setting in which the activity is to take place e.g. a sports centre developing a programme with a sports focus particularly aimed at engaging fathers and teenage children.

The Learning and Skills Council and now the Skills Funding Agency divides family learning into two strands: Wider Family Learning (WFL) and Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN). "WFL programmes are those specifically designed to enable adults and children to learn together or those programmes that enable mothers and fathers to learn how to support their children's learning.

They aim to:

- develop the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants
- help mothers and fathers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support<sup>4</sup>."

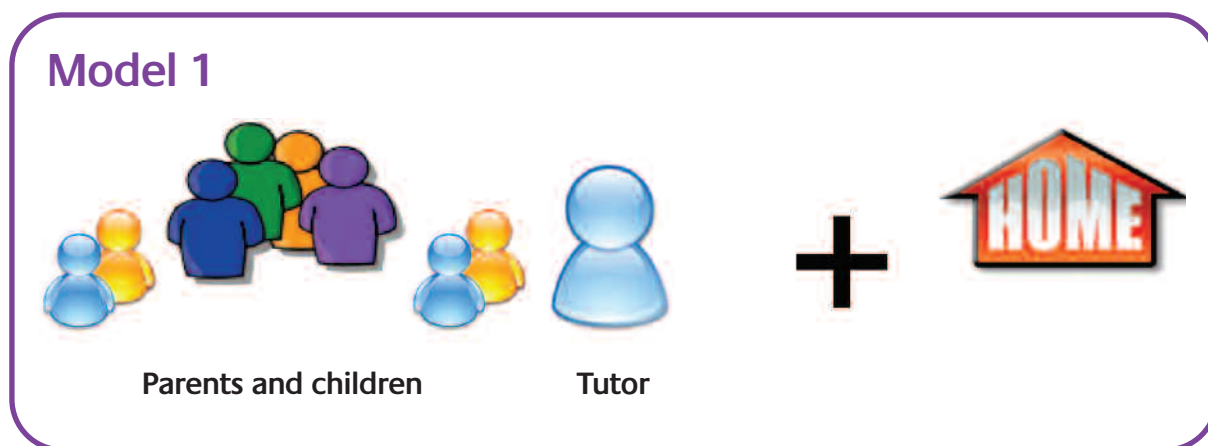
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<sup>3</sup> Helping My Child with Reading & Writing – Family Learning Course Materials Rees, S & Savitzky, F LLU+.

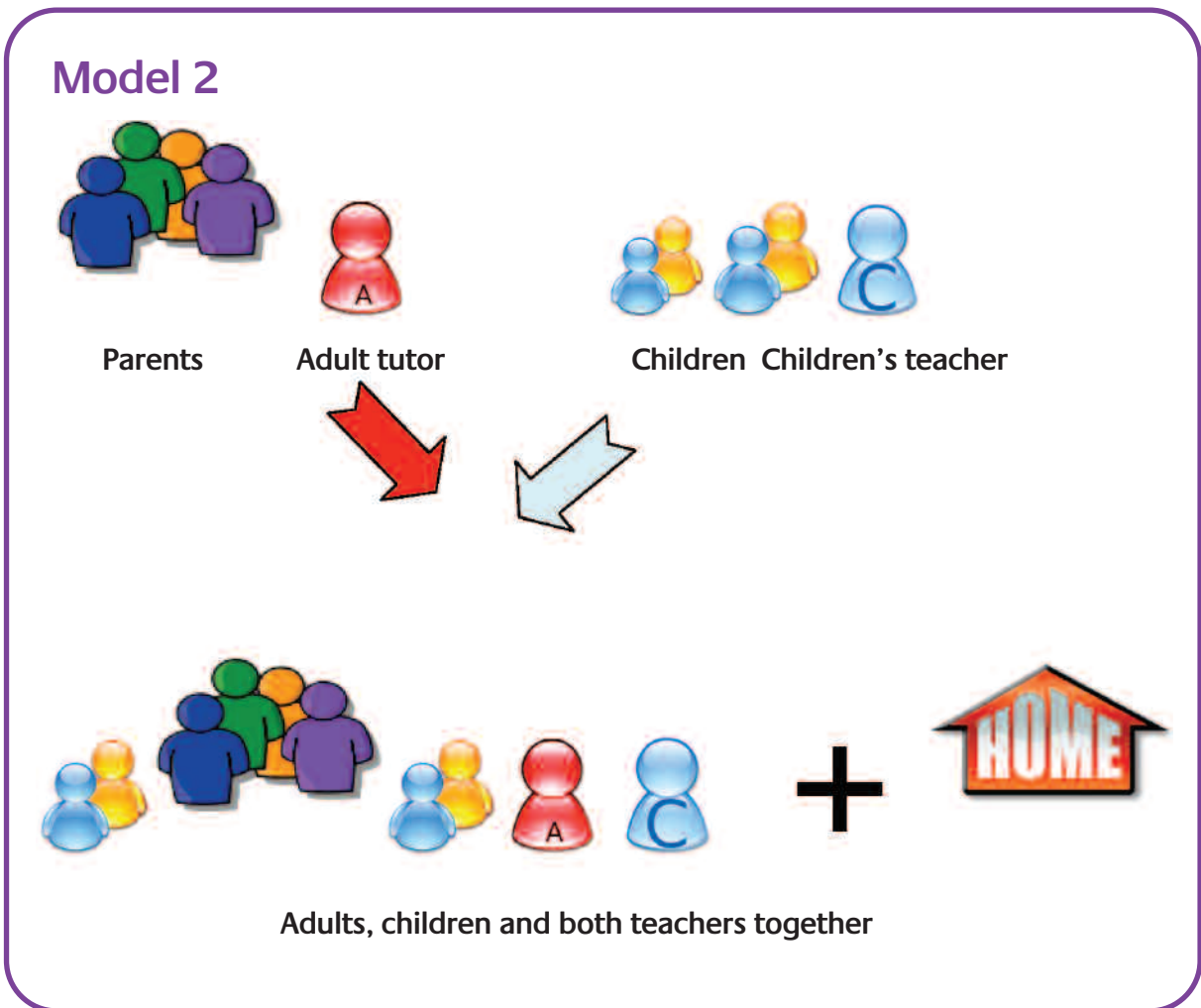
<sup>4</sup> Family Programmes Guidance 2010- 2011 Skills Funding Agency.

Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy share the aims of WFL with the additional remit of improving the literacy, language or numeracy of both parents and children. The programmes are therefore targeted at very specific groups of parents, i.e. those who need support with their own literacy, language or numeracy.

Whatever the source of funding, the context or the content the essential component of all family learning is its **intergenerational element**. Below is a chart depicting a variety of models of delivery. All models must include either overt or covert opportunities for parents to develop strategies for supporting their children's development.

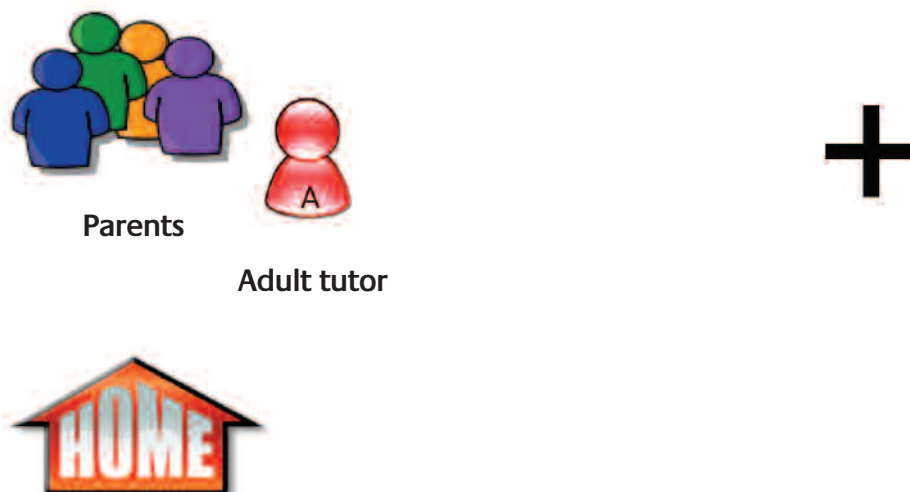


Parents and their children together attend a session or a programme run by a tutor/facilitator trained to work with both adults and children. There can be an additional intergenerational element involved through home activities. Example: a two day family French programme at which parents and children learn to greet each other in French, play games aimed at developing French vocabulary and learn traditional French children's songs. In this case each activity is intergenerational.



In this model the adults have a session run by a tutor/facilitator trained to work with adults whilst the children have a session with their own teacher/facilitator. The two groups then come together with both tutors/facilitators for a joint session. There can also be an intergenerational home activity. Example: a 30 hour family numeracy course delivered over ten sessions of three hours aimed at children in Key Stage 1. The parents in their own sessions learn about how numeracy is taught at Key Stage 1, about the language of maths and have an opportunity to work on their own numeracy skills. The children also have sessions of their own where, each session, they focus on a particular aspect of maths, e.g. measurement. This is followed by a joint session where the children and their parents take part in a maths game/activity reinforcing the learning covered during the individual sessions.

### Model 3



In this model only the adults have taught sessions. The intergenerational element is entirely provided through the content of each session and the home activities. Example: Helping My Child with Reading & Writing – a 90 hour course delivered over 30 weeks during sessions of three hours once a week. The parents learn about how children learn to read and write, how children are taught to read and write, difficulties some children may experience in their literacy development, how to help children learn spellings etc. Parents spend an hour of each session making a literacy activity for their child. They use this activity with their child at home and the following session they feed back to the group on how successful their activity was, what their child learnt, how they will further develop their activity etc.

### How does family learning differ from parenting?

Family learning is not parenting wearing a different hat. The essential difference between family learning and parenting is the intergenerational element of family learning. However, much of what happens during family learning overlaps with parenting, and contributes to helping parents develop parenting skills. So, for instance, when ground rules for a group which will involve the participation of children are set at the beginning of a programme, tutors/facilitators will want to ensure that there are rules concerning the disciplining of children during the sessions. What is and isn't acceptable will be discussed by the group and will provide an opportunity to discuss the value of praise and encouragement versus the negative affects of smacking, shouting etc. Joint family learning sessions will also provide an opportunity for positive adult/child interaction. Practical activities during adult only sessions such as book making also always provide an excellent opportunity for parents to share their experiences of parenting informally and learn from each other, often with very little intervention from tutors/facilitators. The impact of family learning on

parenting can be huge and many parents identify it as being a key part of their learning despite the fact that it was not the specific focus of any session. The following quotes from women who attended family learning sessions at Holloway prison provide an excellent illustration of this:



“Here I can do things for her – at home I don’t have the time. It can be good for the future – here I have learnt to be a good mum.”

Mother HMP Holloway



“Have good ideas for when I get home like those (reward) charts and how to be creative with children.”

Mother HMP Holloway





# The prison environment

*Who this section will be of interest to:*

Any staff and volunteers who will be involved in delivering family learning in a prison setting and who haven't any experience of working in this environment.



“Going into Holloway Prison you feel a bit anxious at first, especially having to wait for someone to open and close gates for you and the restricted space between the gates can be a bit claustrophobic. The metal gates slamming and the keys clanking echo very loudly. At Pentonville, where I also work, you are even more aware that you're working in a prison. The prisoners all wear numbered bibs. There are many more prison officers around and the seating makes moving around more difficult. But once you're working with the prisoners you can easily forget that you're in a prison.”

**Aidah De Coteau – Best Start for Families volunteer**

Although the prison environment appears alien to those in the outside world, it still has much in common with family learning environments in communities elsewhere. In a helpful prison setting, despite the many restrictions:

- family learning tutors, prison staff and those in prison affiliated organisations can still pursue the family learning ideal of facilitating learning through family activity and relationships, inside and outside the home
- parents/carers and children/wards of families with a member in prison can still work towards realising their potential both as a family group and as individuals.

Of course, precisely because prison is an alien environment to those ‘on the outside’, it is important for family learning tutors to know about it before they start working within it. Without this understanding they may not appreciate the needs of prisoners and prison staff – and the possibilities open/closed to them as facilitators of learning.

As when working with families and communities outside prison, it is important to know who you are working with and how they operate in an environment whose restrictions you must all come to terms with.

To start with it can be helpful to remember what kind of prison you are teaching in (e.g. open or high security) and which part of it you are affiliated to. (Working in an Education or Resettlement department can be very different from working on, say, a prison ‘wing’). It can also be very helpful to know what type of prisoners (e.g. on remand, enhanced etc) will participate in your classes and how long you can expect to work with them before they move on to another prison or out into the world. Perhaps even more importantly, you will need to know which staff you will be responsible to in the prison (e.g. prison officers, security or civilian office staff and/or members of charitable organisations such as Pact) – and, specifically, who to consult about such things as course/session content, equipment, classroom issues etc. Knowing the chain of command is also necessary to understanding the way such a highly regulated, hierarchical environment works.

More than any other family learning environment, it is important to know the relevant rules everyone must adhere to – otherwise, you may, quite easily, inadvertently find yourself breaking them.

In all prisons there will be regulations governing, for example:

- **Professional behaviour**

These regulations may be more demanding than those in other organisations - for example in the area of confidentiality. Prisons require confidentiality when talking about prisoners outside prison walls. Even inside, prisoner and staff confidentiality is important. For example, disclosure of staff family life details is generally a no-go area when talking to prisoners. Personal documents such as address books and diaries must not be left around. For family learning tutors who have found an appropriate sharing of family life experience helpful to facilitating individual and group learning, adjustments may need to be made.

- **Health and safety**

Health and Safety is, of course, also a bigger concern in the prison environment than elsewhere. It may cover anything from how the prison works with vulnerable adults (e.g. those on suicide watch) to what equipment is forbidden or what regulations govern its employment. The use of scissors, for example, will always be regulated – not just to guard against them as potential weapons but as instruments of self-harm. Materials that might allow the transportation of harmful substances to the prison wings will also need supervision. In fact all equipment coming in from ‘outside’ will generally need approval from someone in the prison (Security, the person you liaise with in the prison or whoever).

- **Child protection**

If children are present in sessions, you will, as elsewhere, need to know who is responsible for them at a given session and who, among prison staff, has overall responsibility for child protection.

- **Doors and keys etc**

At the start, you will, doubtless, be accompanied to and from a classroom but, even then, there will be regulations about the number of hours notice you need to give before visiting (generally at least 24 hours). As you may need to wait for sometime before an officer has time to collect you, you need to be prepared for a curtailed preparation time in the classroom.

In time, you may be asked to carry your own keys. In this case, the prison will provide training in Do's and Don't's – as with all issues of prison safety.

Certainly the regulations governing prison life can sound daunting for those starting to work with prisoners and their families, but tutors soon get used to them. “Can we take that into the session?” is a question that quickly gets asked so automatically at the session planning stage, one hardly thinks about it consciously.

### **“But if things go wrong, what do I do?”**

For real emergencies there will probably be an alarm to activate somewhere in the classroom or prison staff nearby to intervene if necessary. Of course, you should know where the alarm is and who to turn to if things get out of control, but, even in prisons, family learning emergencies hardly ever happen. In fact, in our experience, prisoners are less of an issue than problematic equipment, the limitations imposed on us by the prison environment or even, on occasion, our own inappropriate choice of session content or activity – things that, with good assessment (and maybe a little luck!), can be rectified for future occasions.

However, of course, as in the outside world, there are sessions when a participant's mental state can seriously affect class relationships and progress – especially if one prisoner wants to dominate discussions or control what happens in class. Even more common are sessions interrupted by parents overcome by family problems they feel helpless to address, let alone alleviate.

No tutor can be ready for all eventualities but tutors who are well prepared mentally as well as educationally, who are trained in classroom management, delivery, team-working and, at times, in simply being appropriately receptive to participants' needs, can go a long way to keeping a session moving to the profit of all. In prisons, family learning tutors are rarely alone in the classroom. Even more than in the outside world, it may be necessary for one tutor to lend a helpful hand or ear on a one-to-one basis while the other proceeds with the teaching. At times staff need to be flexible, able to prioritize needs and develop activities or discussions in ways other than those planned.

It just remains to say that for the well-prepared, committed family learning tutor working in the prison environment can, so often, not just be rewarding – but life enhancing.

### Questions you may want to ask prior to your first session:

1. What training (compulsory/optional) is available to me before and during my family learning course in the prison?
2. Who am I immediately responsible to in the prison? Which member of staff do I liaise with?
3. What regulations govern my relationship to prisoners?
4. In sessions where children are present, who is responsible for them?
5. What regulations do I need to know about using equipment (specifically X and/or Y)?
6. Where do I find out about Health and Safety regulations? e.g. fire drills.
7. What do I do about vulnerable adults e.g. those on suicide watch?
8. Do I need keys? If so, what regulations govern their use? If I don't have keys, how do I get from the prison entrance to my classroom?
9. What do I do in an emergency? Where is the classroom alarm? How do I contact those who will assist – when I am not allowed to have my mobile with me?
10. What can I bring/not bring into the prison environment (e.g. medicine, mobile phone)?

#### Do

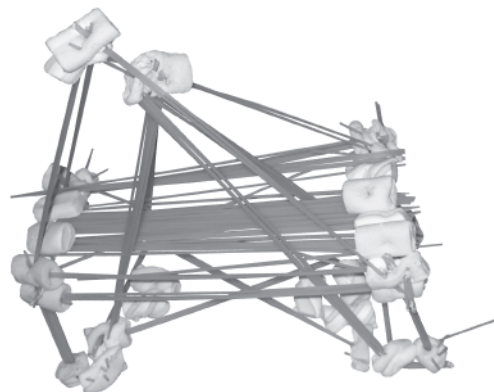
- find out about prohibited items before your first visit to a prison
- make yourself aware of the location of the alarm in your teaching room
- attend training offered by the prison service
- try to feel comfortable in the prison environment so that you can interact with the prisoners and their families in a more productive manner
- ask security or a prison officer if you are unsure about anything a prisoner has asked you
- make prisoners aware that you are there to teach and help them take part in family learning activities with their children, you are not a prison officer
- encourage interaction between parents and their children so that effective bonding can happen, this means making sure no child or parent is left making things on their own
- make sure parents are supervising their children at all times
- ask for help from prison officers if you feel you need it
- report any suspicious behaviour to a prison officer
- remember that security is your responsibility too
- have time available for dealing with emotional situations
- keep your sense of humour so that sessions can be fun as well as productive
- ensure you are aware of prisoners on suicide watch and what your responsibility is towards them.

### Avoid

- physical contact with prisoners particularly of the opposite sex
- giving information about yourself that is not absolutely necessary e.g. where you live, where your children go to school
- arguing or challenging a member of staff in front of prisoners
- challenging a decision made which causes you inconvenience, wait until you have left the prison, have had time to reflect and ask for advice and then find the appropriate person to approach
- using the word prison in front of children. Many parents tell their children they are away working and do not want their children to know they are serving a prison sentence
- taking over an activity for the parents if they are struggling or asking for help. Try to show them instead as the aim of the activities is about the parent and child working together as a team
- asking the prisoners about their convictions or sentences particularly in front of their children (wait for them to open up if they so wish)
- getting too informal with the prisoners, be friendly but remain professional
- treating prisoners on suicide watch differently to other prisoners
- focusing on spelling mistakes in work unless you know the prisoner is happy to discuss these or you can raise them with the group in general.

### Don't

- ever agree to bring in or take out any items from the prison for a prisoner
- let disagreements among prisoners escalate in the group
- be pressurised into undertaking tasks you haven't prepared for
- show favouritism but be friendly to all.





# Why family learning in prisons?

*Who this section will be of interest to:*

All those involved in family learning in prisons, those thinking or wanting to set up family learning in a prison, experienced family learning tutors and managers thinking of expanding their provision by working in prisons and those writing funding bids for family learning in prisons.



“Prisoners felt ‘so much better’ about themselves after being able to work with and help their children. Prisoners place a high value on the well being of their children and are hugely motivated to help them, displaying real interest in helping their children as other parents do. The potential of Family Learning therefore to motivate and enthuse offenders is enormous and should be harnessed<sup>5</sup>...”

*Ellen Ryan external evaluator LLU+ Prototype Project Offenders and Family Learning.*

## The context – ordinary social visits

Maintaining links with a parent in prison is not easy. Ordinary social visits to parents in prison can be fraught with difficulties. Visitors, including children, have to be processed before entering the prison. This can mean queuing for considerable periods. Firstly visitors have to queue to present proof of ID, have their photographs and finger prints taken (not children) etc. At this point they will often have a further waiting period until they are allowed into the prison where they have to queue again to be security checked. This will involve much the same process as airport security with a rub down search and frequently with the addition of sniffer dogs. There may be a further queue as they are waiting to enter the visits hall where their finger prints and photographs are checked again. The result is that visits frequently start very late.

Social visits take place in a dedicated area of the prison, often a large hall, where the furniture is bolted to the floor. Prisoners sit on one side of a small table and their family on chairs facing the

<sup>5</sup> Offender ‘Family Learning’ Prototype Project Final Evaluation Report Ellen Ryan 2006.

prisoner on the other side of the table. Prisoners are allowed to give their visitors a brief kiss and hug on arrival whilst remaining on their side of the table but further physical contact after the initial greeting is discouraged. In most visits halls there is a tea bar where visitors can buy snacks and drinks for the prisoner and themselves. What they buy has to be consumed on the premises. Generally there is also a dedicated children's area often staffed by play workers. Children can go to that area and play, draw, etc. but the imprisoned parent cannot leave their seat and the children cannot take toys out of the play area.

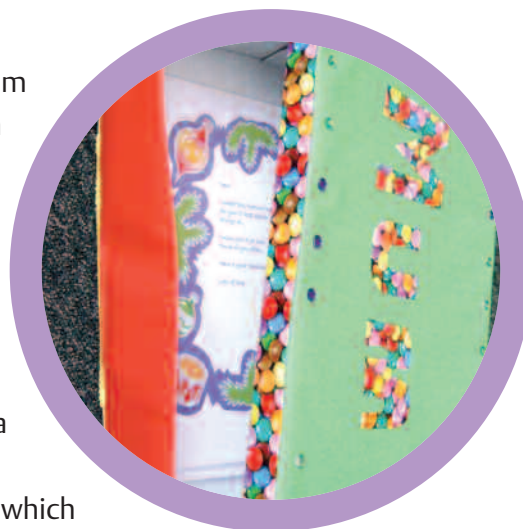


“When my little ones come to visit me they throw off their shoes and run for the play area, which is great for them. When they finally come to the table for a drink I try and read a book to them, but they just want to go off and play. They can't understand that I'm stuck on this red seat.”

Jason<sup>6</sup>

The following are issues that many children face when visiting an imprisoned parent on a social visit:

- Parents, particularly mothers, are often imprisoned far from their families with the result that children have to travel a long way to visit their parent and can arrive feeling tired and hungry.
- The child may not have seen their parent for several weeks or even longer and may feel anxious about re-establishing their relationship.
- Visits can be as short as an hour in duration which may not be long enough to re-establish relationships after a long period apart.
- The child might be anxious in an unfamiliar environment which will require them to be searched by strangers, possibly have to come into contact with sniffer dogs etc.
- The child may not be able to understand the restrictions of a social visit, e.g. daddy not being allowed to move around the visits hall, not being allowed to remove toys from the play area to bring to mummy's table.
- The child may have been traumatized by the parent's arrest and may feel very anxious surrounded by people wearing uniforms similar to police uniforms.
- Older children may find that there is little to occupy them during the visit and that just talking for an hour or more is too long.
- The child may feel impatient if the imprisoned parent and the carer (who may well be the imprisoned parent's partner) spend extended periods of time talking to each other and paying little attention to the child.



<sup>6</sup> “Daddy's working away” a guide to being a good dad in prison Care for the Family & pact 2003.



- The child may have been told not to bring up certain subjects, e.g. topics which may cause the prisoner anxiety, and may feel anxious about this.
- The child may feel resentful or angry with the imprisoned parent for having 'abandoned' them.
- The child may feel overwhelmed with emotions at seeing their parent and facing having to leave them again.
- The child may feel anxious in the very noisy, often hot and restrictive environment of a social visits hall.

The imprisoned parent may also feel ambivalent about being visited by their children. They may feel:

- anxious that their family may not turn up
- guilt at putting their family through such a distressing experience
- that they should 'protect' their children from this environment
- anxious about their children's current care situation, i.e. are they at threat of being taken into care, are they with foster carers?
- that their children may tell their teachers or friends where they are
- that they may not be able to control their emotions on seeing their children
- anxious about having to share their time between their partner and their child/ren
- that their parenting skills are being watched and judged by prison staff, other prisoners etc (visits halls are very public places offering no privacy)
- anxious about being expected to discipline a child who has misbehaved and wasting valuable time with the family.

Many of the above issues also apply to special family or children's days which may also take place in social visits halls but because the sessions are less formal, more relaxed and longer and because family learning provides a focus other than the environment or the reasons for being in prison, they are less tense and intense.

Many prisons now offer special visits which are usually longer in length, an afternoon or even a whole day, in an environment which is more relaxed and less restricted. These visits may be called extended children's visits, family days or fun days. Typically the prisoners are given permission to move around the space in which the visit is taking place, activities are provided for the children and in some cases prison officers are encouraged to wear their own clothes instead of uniform. These visits are much easier than ordinary social visits for prisoners, for children and visiting adults but unless the activities provided are intergenerational, i.e. they are designed to engage parents and children together and are therefore family learning activities, they fail to capitalize on the opportunity for parents and their children to work together as a team to enable the cementing of relationships, to develop new skills etc. At best these non-family learning activities provide an opportunity for children to have fun watched by their parents.

### The benefits of family learning for families affected by imprisonment

An estimated 160,000 children under 18 in the UK have a parent in prison<sup>7</sup> each year. A little over 65% of women and just under 60% of men prisoners have dependent children. Of those 74% have children under 10 years of age<sup>8</sup>.

Family learning:

- helps families to develop the tools to work together as a team
- helps families to make the most of the time they spend together at visits
- helps adults to reflect on their situation and the effect of imprisonment on their children
- helps adults to understand their children's needs and how to meet them.

Children of prisoners are statistically more likely to themselves be imprisoned as adults<sup>9</sup>. It is important therefore that families are supported through terms of imprisonment to break that cycle of offending. Family learning is an ideal vehicle for contributing to this by strengthening family bonds, by developing skills, by emphasizing the importance of education and by demonstrating that learning is for everyone and that it can be fun and exciting. Family learning, particularly sessions aimed at the adults only, can also provide the tools for parents to better understand their children and consequently to support them in both their social and educational development.



“I’ve learnt to listen and to communicate more. To understand my child’s feelings and where she’s coming from.”

Mother HMP Holloway



“I’ve learnt how to educate my children, how to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to them.”

Mother HMP Holloway

Children of prisoners are particularly vulnerable and are often the victims of social stigma and bullying. They frequently suffer from anguish, guilt, fear, confusion and shame.

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<sup>7</sup> DCSF/Moj Children of Offenders 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Home Office Research Study 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Van Wormer & Bartolas, 2000.



“A growing body of research shows that children with fathers in prison experience raised levels of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of concentration, lowered academic performance, increased truanting, running away from home, juvenile delinquency.<sup>10</sup>”



“It is estimated that 35 per cent of prisoners' children report mental health issues in comparison with just 10 per cent of all children.<sup>11</sup>”

Family learning provides a focus for the family and an opportunity for them to enjoy each others' company. It also helps to reassure children that their parents are well and still there for them.



“I would like to make things every time I come and see mum. It's nice to be able to do something creative with my mum. It makes us closer to each other.”

Child HMP Holloway

The therapeutic benefits of taking part in creative activities is also an important element of family learning and often makes communication between generations and family members easier.



“I have really enjoyed seeing my children communicate with their dad.”

Visiting mother HMP Pentonville

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<sup>10</sup> Gabel and Johnston 1995, Boswell& Wedge 2002, Farrington 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Cathy Stancer, director of the charity Women in Prison.

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2006/08/14/55261/Parents-in-prison-the-effects-on-children.htm>

Some activities can provide both parents and children with an opportunity to express their feelings in non-threatening or even playful ways as the quotes below demonstrate. The theme of the family day was pirates and one of the activities involved children writing and sending a letter in a bottle to their fathers and the fathers sending a letter to their children...

Dear Dad,

I can't wait to see u I love u very much. Why did u go wahtout saying goodbye u broke my heart in 2 halves I miss u a lot I cant wait to see u and hug u and stay whit u for every and every. I love u dad.

Dear Dad,

Me, K and S are missing you terribly, the water ain't the same without you on it. You are the heart of the sea, the soul of the pirates and the love of the people. Dad you're the best and no words can describe how much you are deeply missed.

Dear Long serving JS,

Oh arr, laddie, me art bleeds for ya Jim lad. I has been saving me pieces of eight to buy you a nice bottle of rum. This pirate lark is no good, robbing, pillaging, sailing the seven seas, let's lead an honest life when you get out, lets sell cauliflowers in the market.

My dearest Darling Princess,

I have missed you so very much. I have been stuck on the Island Pentonville for 4 months and can not wait to sail home to help you ride your bike, tuck you into bed and have walks with our dog Tiger...

The family learning activities also give children an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and learning to their parents.



“My children and nephew were very excited to be able to guide and tell me what to do, they actually take charge and when we did not win they said maybe we should have listened for your instructions!”

**Mother HMP Holloway**

Through the activities children have the opportunity to achieve and feel proud. This contributes to greater self-esteem and confidence and reduces the incidence of mental problems.



“The mothers and kids have really enjoyed working together, you only have to look at the kids as they carry their work home with them to see how proud they are.”

**Prison Officer HMP Holloway**

Family learning contributes to creating a more ‘normal’ experience of family life for children of prisoners (and often provides positive family experiences which they may not have even when their parent is not in prison). So, for instance, a child who has attended a family learning session in prison at a weekend can go to school on a Monday morning and show their class what they made with their parent just as other children whose parents are not in prison would do. Children who come from families where parents abuse drugs or alcohol may not have had many opportunities to engage in fun activities with adults. Family learning enables parents to give their full attention to their children and demonstrate how much they do care for them.

In a needs analysis carried out at Holloway prison in 2008 one third of women identified themselves as needing help to rebuild relationships with their children. Family learning activities also contribute to building a sense of family.



“This (family learning) has had a major impact. The fathers have demonstrated that they need to have that link with their children. It has contributed to stronger ties within the families involved.”

**Prison Officer HMP Pentonville**



“The (family learning) sessions have brought us closer. They give us a chance to create things together. The sessions were absolutely brilliant.”

Mother HMP Holloway



“Fathers may feel they have an excellent opportunity to bond with their children for a short time in a relaxed atmosphere. The overall impact may have a really positive result in the long-term.”

Prison Officer HMP Pentonville

Taking part in activities together means having to listen to each other, learn from each other, co-operate and work as a team. They also provide families with an opportunity to celebrate achievement. Parents frequently comment on how much they learn about their children during these sessions and also how much they learn from them.



“Doing these activities together I’ve learnt that my daughter is very creative and can use scissors on her own.”

Mother HMP Holloway

Family learning can also provide tutors with an opportunity to signpost parents to appropriate provision both within and outside the prison, e.g. local children’s centres, parenting classes and literacy classes.

Most importantly, family learning enables parents to continue playing an active role in the upbringing of their children.

“My daughter who has just started primary school will be an adult by the time I leave prison. Family learning gives me the opportunity to still be involved in her education.”

Mother HMP Holloway

## Links between maintaining family relationships and reducing re-offending

A wide range of research clearly demonstrates that maintaining family relationships during a term of imprisonment directly contributes to reducing offending both for the imprisoned parent and for their children:



“Evidence demonstrates that over half of offenders (58%) will be reconvicted within two years of discharge from prison, but research shows that prisoners who maintain strong family ties whilst they are in prison are up to six times less likely to re-offend.<sup>12</sup>”



“For many offenders, maintaining strong links with their families and communities is a key factor in enabling rehabilitation. Conversely, the breakdown of these links, and the ensuing isolation, can increase the risk of re-offending.<sup>13</sup>”



“Maintaining strong relationships with families and children can play a major role in helping prisoners to make and sustain changes that help them to avoid re-offending. This is difficult because custody places added strains on family relationships.<sup>14</sup>”

Special family or children’s visits with family learning activities allow families to interact in a relaxed and informal way. They provide a fun and stimulating environment for the whole family in which family bonds can be strengthened. A successful visit will encourage further visits thus contributing to the maintenance of family ties.



“These have been the two best days since I have been in prison. It’s the only time I feel close to my son. It makes me cry but it’s brilliant.”

Father HMP Pentonville

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<sup>12</sup> [www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> DFES 2005, p11.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.emcett.com/offender/two/seven\\_pathways.html](http://www.emcett.com/offender/two/seven_pathways.html)



“Mr A has been an inmate at HMP Pentonville for about 9 months and has shared with me the fact that he had only seen his 7 year old son once in all that time. He didn’t want to see his son during ‘normal’ visits because he felt that the atmosphere and restrictions of them both having to just sit still facing each other for 2 hours would make the whole visit extremely fraught and stressful for them both, and he didn’t want to put his son through that, and it wouldn’t do much for their relationship. He was so excited to be on the family visit. His son arrived with Mr A’s mother and sister. When they were invited to take part in the family drawing/artwork activities, he was a bit reluctant to take part at first saying he was no good at that sort of thing but because his son was keen to get involved he gradually started to contribute. When they all moved to the larger area later, it was wonderful to watch the interaction between the whole family. Dad couldn’t stop hugging and touching his son and they were both smiling from ear to ear. It was very moving. At one point when his son had encouraged him to help him work on the wall painting with him I saw Mr A’s eyes fill with tears. This heavily tattooed guy was obviously overwhelmed by the whole thing.

On Tuesday I went into the visit’s hall, Mr A called me over to say what a fantastic time they’d all had. He said that his sister said it was brilliant too. She said that it was the closest they’d been as a family for a long time.”

Carol Hayward *pact worker HMP Pentonville*

## Literacy and numeracy levels among prisoners

A DFES study in 2005 found that 52% of male prisoners and 71% of female prisoners had no qualifications at all.<sup>15</sup> Another study carried out by the National Literacy Trust in 2008<sup>16</sup> showed that 25% of young offenders have a reading age below what would be expected of an average seven year old. It also found that 60% of the general prison population have difficulties with basic literacy skills. An even greater number (65%) have a numeracy level at or below Level 1.

Although by no means all family learning activities have an overt literacy or numeracy focus, many activities will include some element of these, e.g. following instructions, writing a mother’s day

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<sup>15</sup> DFES (2005). *Reducing re-offending through skills and employment: Next steps*. London: DFES.

<sup>16</sup> Christina Clark and George Dugdale *Literacy Changes Lives – The role of literacy in offending behaviour* National Literacy Trust



greeting, using measurements to make a gift box. These activities will enable some learners to develop new skills and will reinforce skills for others. However, the real contribution of wider family learning activities is in demonstrating that learning can be fun and that learning is for everyone, regardless of age. Success on a family learning course or even on a family learning day can, and often does, motivate parents to take up further learning opportunities particularly for the sake of their children. Parents who understand the value of education for their children and their role in supporting their child's education are more likely to want to take up learning opportunities such as literacy or numeracy classes for the sake of their children.

### Prison – a stressful environment

Prisons are a stressful environment both for those who work there and for prisoners. There are many reasons for this. One of the most important contributing factors is the incidence of mental illness.



“The Prison Service in the UK has under its care one of the most vulnerable and mentally unhealthy populations anywhere. Epidemiological studies agree that the prevalence of serious personality disorders, drug and alcohol dependence, suicidal and self-harming behaviour, and all forms of mental illness (both psychotic and neurotic) is alarmingly high – much higher than in the general population.<sup>17</sup>”



“More than 70% of the prison population has two or more mental health disorders. Male prisoners are 14 times more likely to have two or more disorders than men in general, and female prisoners are 35 times more likely than women in general.<sup>18</sup>”



“The suicide rate in prisons is almost 15 times higher than in the general population: in 2002 the rate was 143 per 100,000 compared to 9 per 100,000 in the general population.<sup>19</sup>”

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.prisonmentalhealth.org/>

<sup>18</sup> Social Exclusion Unit, 2004, quoting Psychiatric Morbidity Among Prisoners In England And Wales, 1998.

<sup>19</sup> The National Service Framework For Mental Health: Five Years On, Department of Health, 2004; Samaritans Information Resource Pack, 2004.

A contributing factor to the incidence of mental health problems and incidents of self harm is the fact that the prison system can often define inmates solely as prisoners thus depriving them of their identity as parents and not recognising the responsibilities and consequent anxieties they have concerning their children. Family days with family learning activities provide an opportunity for parents to be recognised as such, to be seen in a role other than merely of a prisoner. Conversely, these days and activities can also provide prisoners with the opportunity to see prison officers in a different role as well, as when they interact with children.

In the prison environment activities which provide a positive focus, a creative outlet, and ideas for a way forward must be valuable. The following comments testify to the beneficial effect of family learning in beginning to create a different atmosphere within the confines of prison.



“It gives them quality time sitting down, doing something constructive. They take the stuff they have made to their rooms and they can look back and see they’ve done something as a family.”

Prison Officer HMP Holloway



“I really enjoyed the way the visits made my partner and children feel happy.”

Visiting mother HMP Pentonville



“It has a very positive impact on the inmates as it gives something for the mothers and children to work on together. “

Prison Officer HMP Holloway



“You feel helpless in here and this (family learning) is a way to connect with your children.”

Mother HMP Holloway



“I think (family learning sessions) are very good. The hardest thing about being in prison is being away from your children. It helps you forget you are in prison and concentrate on your child.”

Mother HMP Holloway

The impact of the family learning days spills out of the visits hall as the following comment illustrates.



“Since the focus of family days has become more family oriented and thus children being the main focus, it has been so lovely to be a part of this change. The prisoners don’t need any coaxing any more now to get involved, they willingly take part with such enthusiasm. I see big grins on their faces for days later as they walk around the prison and many thank me personally for such a lovely visit.”

**Helen McLachlan Family Liaison Officer Pentonville**

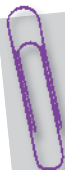
### To conclude

**Family learning activities** provide a focus for the family that engages everyone in a common aim. Through the activities family members are able to talk naturally to each other without having to focus on either the environment in which they are, the reason for being there or any feelings of anger, resentment etc they may have. Moreover, family learning provides opportunities for relationships to develop, for parents to practise positive parenting strategies in a safe and supportive environment and for both parents and children to learn new skills and build on existing skills. Family learning contributes to making prison a more manageable and calm environment in which to work, live and reflect on past mistakes and new beginnings.





## How does family learning in a prison differ from family learning in the wider community?



*Who this section will be of interest to:*

Experienced family learning practitioners in the community, prison staff who are organising family learning activities in a prison and who want to ensure that they brief tutors from outside appropriately, volunteers and paid staff from organisations such as pact working alongside family learning tutors, and staff from external organisations such as museums running one-off sessions in prisons.



“I had never worked in a prison before visiting Pentonville at the end of 2010. It was something I was keen to do but I had concerns that the inmates might be unreceptive, wonder why I was there and not be interested in what I had brought with me. I was also concerned about intruding too much on the family in the short time they had together.

However it was mainly very similar to running a family learning session in any large space where families drop in – some were very engaged and interested, others less so and some needed a bit of encouragement. The main differences were the limitations on craft items we could bring in, needing a bit of creativity on activities that would and wouldn't work.

There was a wide variety of ages which meant having a lot of activities to do was important but also keeping the day quite structured and giving out the different activities steadily throughout

the time available. Choosing activities which could be completed together was important.

I would be very keen to work with families in this setting again; something special to do together seemed to be really appreciated and helped families interact together in the time available.”

**Laura Dixon, Learning Officer, British Postal Museum and Archive.**

As the quote above illustrates, in many ways what happens in family learning in a prison is not much different from what happens in any other family learning setting, each has its own characteristics. However, there are some differences which must be taken into consideration and which tutors need to be prepared for. Going into a prison, in many ways, is like travelling to another country. You need to bring your passport (unless you have a pass), there are controlled borders, to a certain extent there is a different language, there are certainly different rules and regulations, traditions and a difference in culture. Once in the prison things appear very different to an outsider but soon, as in any visit to another country, one gets used to the new surroundings, the cultural and language differences and life there seems as familiar as life outside.

### The regime

For reasons of public safety prisons have to operate according to national regulations as well as local ones. Each prison is different but there are some standard regulations which apply across all prisons, e.g. the prohibition of mobile telephones, drugs and alcohol. The regime controls all activity in a prison from the movement of prisoners around the prison, to the running of social visits, to meal times. So, for example, a change made at governor level may mean that family learning can no longer take place on the same day or that sessions are extended by half an hour.

As civilians, i.e. non-prison officers, it is very important to understand and respect the rules and regulations which govern the prisons even if the reason for them does not appear to be very clear to an outsider. It is equally important to understand that these rules and regulations can change from day to day, for example, if the state of alert changes, or if there is a public outcry concerning some aspect of prison life. This can have a major impact on the planning and delivery of courses.

Despite some changes being instituted very rapidly, in other respects things can appear to move very slowly in a prison setting. It will probably take months to set up family learning provision from scratch in a prison. Decisions can rarely be made immediately as several layers of the hierarchy have to be consulted. Civilians not used to working in a prison environment may find the restrictions imposed by the regime, the slow pace and sudden changes frustrating; they may feel out of control. However, it is important, to work within the constraints and within the system.

Prisons operate along a hierarchical structure with governor number one at the top, other governors with areas of responsibility under that and then several grades of prison officer below them. It is important to understand the hierarchy and where family learning fits in terms of areas of responsibility.

The regime can also have an impact on attendance and punctuality. It is not uncommon for prisoners to have to attend dentist, doctor's appointments etc during class time. They have no choice, that is the only time the doctor is available. Legal visits and court appearances also frequently prevent learners from making it to their classes. In remand prisons the situation is made more complex due to the uncertainty concerning the likelihood or not of the prisoner being found guilty and given a prison sentence. Additionally, particularly in remand prisons, transfers from one prison to another can happen at the last minute and leave a prisoner unable to finish a course or programme and tutors with too few learners in a class.

### Staffing

Anyone going into a prison on a regular basis will need to attend training provided by the prison service and will have to go through an enhanced security check. As mentioned in the chapter on the prison environment, staff who do not have keys will need to notify 'the gate' of their visit at least 24hrs prior to it. A last minute change of staff because of illness etc cannot be accommodated.

### The adult learners/participants

There is no typical prisoner profile. However, it is true to say, that there are a disproportionate number of prisoners with the following:

- low literacy and numeracy levels
- dyslexia
- drug and alcohol problems
- poor experience of being parented including having spent time in care (over one quarter of prisoners were in care as children<sup>20</sup>)
- no formal qualifications (52% of male prisoners and 71% of female prisoners have no qualifications at all – DFES study 2005)
- mental health problems including a high incidence of self-harm (70% of sentenced prisoners suffer from two or more diagnosable mental health problems).

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<sup>20</sup> Children in Care NSPCC 2007.

Not all prisoners, however, fit this stereotype. Prisoners include medical doctors, teachers, social workers, police officers etc. In other words all of society is represented within the prison population. Below are outline profiles of some prisoners who have attended family learning sessions run by LLU+.

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*Fred* is a grandfather of two boys both born to his only son. Fred was born and brought up in south east London as were generations of his family before him. He left school at age 14 with no qualifications and was employed as a fishmonger and butcher. However, from the age of 13 he became known to the police for his involvement in petty crime. This involvement increased and between the ages of 19 and 30 he was in and out of prison. In his early 30s he was sentenced to eight years. Whilst in custody Fred's son died. Fred attended the course, Helping My Child with Reading and Writing to enable him to support his grandsons' education on release.

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*Justin* was a high ranking civil servant until he received a life sentence with a minimum tariff of 10 years for the murder of his wife. Prior to this sentence Justin had led a completely crime-free life. He likes people to know that he had not even ever had a driving conviction. Justin has three children aged between 2 and 12 years. They are being looked after by his sister and her husband with a lot of help from his mother. One of Justin's main concerns is that his children's education should not suffer through his being in prison. He insists on seeing school reports, getting feedback from parents' evenings etc. He frequently writes long letters to his children and expects them to write to him.

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*David* is a father of an adult son and a fifteen year old. He has a grandson who, when he is not in prison, he sees several times a week. David's adult son has served several prison sentences. David has been in and out of prison throughout his life. He is currently serving the last two years of a ten year sentence for armed robbery. He expresses the wish to remain out of prison in the future, to turn the corner and to play a very active role in the life of his son and grandson who he does not want to see following in his footsteps. David truanted from school from a very early age and finds literacy and numeracy challenging. He thinks that he could become good at maths if he had the opportunity.

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*Lee* is coming to the end of his sentence for fraud. He worked for a firm in the city. He has four children and his wife has been looking after them while he has been inside. He often talks about the guilt that he feels for putting his family in the situation that they are in. He has said that it is not him serving his sentence but his wife. He is very keen to support his two younger children with their school work. He feels that he neglected his two older children and wishes that he "had been more there for them and not so strict". Although desperate to get out of prison he is anxious about returning to the family home and coping with day to day things.

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*Manolis* has a 12 year old son who lives with his ex-wife. He has not seen his son for two years as his mother did not want him to come into the prison. Recently his son has been in trouble with the police and his ex-wife has been in touch asking him to help her deal with him. Manolis is expecting his son to visit him very soon and is increasingly anxious about the visit. Manolis feels that one of the barriers he faces with his son is the fact that he does not speak English fluently and his son only speaks a little Greek.

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*Leroy* is the father of three teenage children who live with their mother, Leroy's partner. The children are causing their mother serious problems in terms of their behaviour, their school work and, with the eldest, her drinking. On several occasions Leroy's children arrived at the prison for social visits looking very tired and in a very bad mood. Sometimes by the end of the visit he has not managed to get them into a better frame of mind.

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*Shamin* is serving a life sentence with a minimum tariff of 10 years. She has a 10 year old son who lives with her sister. She is very concerned about her son's transition to secondary school. She would like to have an idea of the schools in her sister's area to which her son could apply. She is also concerned that her son should continue to speak Urdu. Her sister does not seem to think this is important. Shamin has found her son difficult to communicate with when he has visited her during social visits recently. Shamin has attempted suicide on a number of occasions.

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*Grace* is a foreign national. She is from Nigeria and is awaiting trial for bringing drugs into the UK. Grace has four children in Nigeria who she thinks her aunt is looking after. She is extremely worried about them because the reason she imported drugs was to make money to feed her children and perhaps send them to school. Also her youngest child has sickle cell and needs medication which she couldn't afford. To make matters even more complicated Grace is pregnant with her fifth child who is due in seven weeks' time. Grace has had very little formal education and can just about write her name and basic information. She carries the names of her children written on a piece of paper so that she can copy them if needed.

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*Fay* has two children aged 9 and 11. She is serving a long sentence and has been attending family learning sessions and children's visits for several years. She always ensured that the tutors knew that she was a primary school teacher prior to being in prison. However, a recent conversation with Fay's mother has revealed that she was always "the bad apple", had left school before obtaining any qualifications, had been drinking and taking drugs since her early teens etc. Her sister is a school teacher. Fay has lots of practical skills and excels at making cards, decorations etc.

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*Karen* is a highly qualified paediatric nurse. She worked for a big teaching hospital while bringing up her two daughters. Her sister has looked after the girls for the last seven years since the beginning of her sentence. She says that she could not have asked for a more supportive network of family and friends. She is very proud of her daughters who have both done very well at school. They are now almost too old to come and visit her on the extended children's visit. She is very worried that this is going to affect her relationship with them and is concerned that they might go down the wrong path and repeat her mistakes.

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*Maria* is 18 years old and has a toddler of 18 months who lives with her boyfriend who is not the baby's father. For six months when her son was 9 months old she was in prison on a drug related charge which included violent behaviour. She is now back in prison on remand for another drug related crime. Maria is concerned that her boyfriend does not have any time for himself, to go out with friends etc. She is worried because last time her son came on a visit he didn't want to be held or kissed by her. Maria spent her childhood in and out of care. Maria's arms are covered in scars.

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*Alison* is serving a life sentence with a minimum tariff of 15 years. She has a son who is now three years old. She is appealing against her sentence but does not hold out much hope of being released before her son turns 18. Her son is being raised by her mother in whom Alison does not have much confidence. She partly blames her mother for the situation she finds herself in. Alison is very keen to be involved in her son's education and upbringing as much as possible. Alison self-harms and suffers from periods of depression. Alison has good literacy skills and is a native English speaker.

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Tutors will generally not have much of the above kind of information concerning prisoners until they have worked with them for a few sessions when the prisoners may decide to divulge the information. Some tutors may feel they need to have the information to be able to adapt their teaching to meet the specific needs of individuals. They will be given the information by the person they report to in the prison for their area of work if they request it.

Despite the very complex and troubled backgrounds of many prisoners when adults are attending a session with their children, it is extremely rare that any issues relating to difficult, aggressive or violent behaviour occur. Firstly, prisoners understand the value of family/children's days and do not want to jeopardise their opportunity to attend subsequent visits. Secondly in a prison context where prisoners are less likely to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, difficult behaviour is much less likely to manifest itself. Lastly prisoners who are likely to present difficult or dangerous behaviour would be prevented from attending a session where they could put other people at risk. Risk assessments are carried out prior to each visit.

In adult only sessions tensions between individuals can manifest themselves. A parent might arrive at a family learning session having just received very troubling news from home (this can range from children being moved from one foster carer to another, to a partner wanting to end a relationship, to a child being in trouble with the police). The parent's state of mind is immediately communicated to the rest of the group who will often try and provide support. Sometimes this support is welcome, at other times it might be rejected in a manner which increases the tension in the group. Tutors have to tread a fine line between acknowledging how learners are feeling and not allowing this to dominate the agenda for the whole session. At other times there may have been an incident in the prison which prisoners all have an opinion on, and within one group, there may be varying opinions. Tutors have to be very adept at handling such situations and knowing when they need to ask for support from prison officers.

Although specific families might be targeted for family learning activities, in the wider community generally families refer themselves and attend on a voluntary basis. Whilst this may also be true of family learning in prisons, there can be an element of compulsion in some instances. For example at Pentonville prison fathers are offered the opportunity of attending a family day on the understanding that they will take part in the family learning activities provided. It is very helpful that fathers understand the nature of the visit and that all those who attend share an understanding of the aims and expectations. In other prisons where family learning activities are seen as an add on and not core to the visit engaging some of the families can prove problematic. For example a parent attending a session on a children's day at Holloway prison, unaware of the purpose of the family learning activities, told a family learning tutor, "*the time I have with my children is too precious, I don't want to waste it*" when offered the opportunity to join in the activities provided. Her children, however, were drawn to the activities and the entire family eventually took part in all the activities on offer.

A common and unifying factor in family learning in a prison environment is that families do not live together so the relationships are more complex than families outside prisons. This can also mean, particularly in the case of women, that their children are in care so their lives have been severely disrupted. Joint family learning sessions are particularly charged with emotions for both the adults and children concerned. Adults plan and look forward to visits from their children with great anticipation. They look forward to introducing their children to other prisoners and to showing them off. They are also aware that there is an element of judgment from their peers in terms of the behaviour, appearance etc of their children. In most joint family/children's visits the prisoners are gathered together in the room in which the visit is taking place awaiting the arrival of their children. The atmosphere is tense amongst those whose children have not yet arrived. They know that a 'no show' will look bad and will have been witnessed by both other prisoners and prison staff adding to their natural disappointment. The complex lives prisoners' families lead means that it is not infrequent for a family not to turn up to a visit.

### The children of prisoners

In many cases, the factors that have led to a parent's imprisonment are also likely to be factors which contribute to poor parenting. Problems including mental health and alcohol and drug abuse all impact on parenting and the development of supportive and nurturing relationships. Many prisoners' families are also educationally and financially disadvantaged. All of these factors can have an impact on personal competence and many children are raised in families where knowledge of their needs and how to meet these is limited. This is compounded by the fact that many of the children have had their lives seriously disrupted by the imprisonment of a parent. They may have been taken into foster care, they may have moved in with a relative, friends or neighbours and in many cases this will have meant a change of school, leaving friends behind etc.

When attending joint family learning sessions, despite the many difficulties children of prisoners face, there is only very occasionally the need for adults other than the parents to step in to prevent a child having an accident or getting into trouble. On the other hand at almost all sessions there are very distressed children. The reasons for their distress are many and varied but mostly connected to separation. Younger children who have not seen their parent for a few months may not recognize them and may become very upset when left in that parent's care. The parent may not feel confident enough in his/her ability to console the child and will need a lot of reassuring support from other adults including family learning tutors. Other children will become very upset at the end of a visit as they become aware that soon they will have to leave their parent behind. It is important for tutors to be prepared for the emotions they may experience and for support to be made available to them whilst they are working in prisons.

The age range of children who attend joint family learning activities in prisons can be very wide, whereas in the community outside the prison there will be a crèche for under fives and the children attending the session with their parents will generally be restricted to a specific age group. Working with parents and children varying in age from a few weeks to seventeen years of age can present challenges. There is the challenge of finding activities which will interest and capture the imagination of the range of children and there is the challenge of engaging children and particularly young people in activities when they may be resentful at having to have left home early in the morning at a weekend, at their parent for getting into trouble, at the world in general for making their adolescent lives even more difficult. Tutors and facilitators will have to use all their skills to overcome the barriers some of the children will present them with. Tutors will need to encourage their parents in understanding why their children are reacting negatively to their situation.



Another common occurrence is children being very protective of their imprisoned parents. They will avoid giving any difficult information or sharing problems and will frequently make statements, designed to make the parents feel good, which in many ways are not true:

*My hero's name spels out a little about her  
Loving and caring  
Is always their  
Supporting  
Always doing wats best  
My hero!  
My hero is my mum.*

Conversely parents will frequently make statements on behalf of their children articulating what the parent wants to hear with little thought as to what the child might actually be thinking and feeling.

*My mummy is beautiful. Her name is Felicia. I love my mummy.*

This was written by a mother on a poster her distressed two year old was helping her make. Tutors will probably find it easier to ignore these statements and if appropriate challenge them at another point in a different context.

Some children, on the other hand, are willing to share their conflicting feelings with their parents as the following poem in a mother's day card made by adolescent boys for their mother illustrates.

*Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
You may be in the nick  
Your time will go quick  
You shouldn't of been so thick  
Have a happy mother's day.  
Your loving sons.*

Group sizes or staff/family ratio is another difference between joint family learning sessions in the wider community and joint family learning sessions in prisons. Many of the joint family learning sessions which take place in prisons happen during special family or children's visits. For reasons of equity (as many prisoners as possible having the opportunity to attend) and economy these sessions are generally open to anything between 20 and 40 families. This can mean an attendance of up to 120 adults and 80 children. It is not uncommon for two family learning tutors to plan the activities alongside the prison's family liaison officer and a representative from any other organisations which will be involved, e.g. pact. The actual ratio of family learning staff to parents and children is very low – perhaps as few as two but these are supplemented by volunteers with training in family learning and the presence of prison officers, some of whom are happy to lend a hand. Sessions can be very busy and rather hectic but numbers are not overwhelming.

### Communicating with participants

There is often an issue with communicating with all participants. Acoustics are often not the major priority in planning a prison visit's hall, or a gym, for that matter. Also prisoners and their visitors do not all arrive at the same time so addressing the whole group or even all the prisoners at once is usually impossible. Activities have to be planned so that families can get on with as little guidance as possible from the front. Instruction sheets, pre-prepared examples and assistants/volunteers who can provide support are all essential. Tutors need to be fleet footed to move from one family to another very speedily.

Prisoners are expected to address prison officers as Miss, Mrs, Sir etc. For this reason it is not unusual for prisoners to address education staff, family learning tutors and other civilians by their title too. It is also important for tutors to remember to refer to prison officers by their title and surname rather than the familiar first name when talking to them or about them in front of prisoners.

### Tools and resources

As mentioned in previous chapters, for reasons of safety and security certain items are forbidden in a prison environment and yet others are restricted (see list of prohibited items in appendix). Tutors will need to send a list of all the resources they would like to use to the person they liaise with in a prison or directly to security. Computers/laptops, cameras and other electronic equipment are in general not allowed.

### Signposting to other provision

An element of good practice in the community which can be difficult to address in a prison context is the issue of signposting to other provision, progression etc. Family learning tutors should familiarise themselves with education and other provision provided within the prison in which they work so that they can signpost prisoners to appropriate classes. However, it can be difficult to signpost visitors who may come from very far afield and prisoners who are being released into the community who may also be moving far away from the prison. Prison regulations can make it almost impossible for family learning tutors to contact a prisoner or their family post-release to follow up their progress in getting in touch with education or family learning in their community. Contact with other organisations working in the prison who are there specifically to support prisoners post-release can be a very useful way round this issue.

### Skills and qualities required by family learning practitioners in a prison setting

Good family learning practitioners are people with excellent people skills who are creative, enjoy a challenge and can adapt to different situations. Those who will be working in a prison environment may need a few additional skills and qualities to enable them to cope with this particular environment.

The following are a list of attributes and qualities identified by tutors training to work in prisons:

- diplomacy
- a clear awareness of role boundaries
- accepting of hierarchical structures
- knowing when and how to accept a decision without complaint
- a lot of patience
- adaptability, e.g. how to run a session which requires a lot of cutting out without scissors because a security situation prohibits the use of scissors that day
- an ability to enforce and keep to boundaries
- highly developed organisational skills, e.g. sessions need to be planned a long way ahead so that tools and resources can be checked and agreed with security in plenty of time
- enhanced emotional detachment i.e. the ability to continue with one's work when parents and/or children are very distressed
- an ability to remain calm on the outside at least (a prison officer at HMP Pentonville likened this to a duck gliding across a lake and appearing very relaxed and calm when under the water he is busy moving his feet at great speed)
- an ability to think on one's feet
- a willingness and ability to use one's initiative
- a highly developed sense of humour (this will often be shared with prisoners many of whom are able to laugh at the most difficult situations)
- thick skin
- an ability to read and assess a situation quickly
- a willingness to work at weekends, during school holidays etc

### To sum up

Running family learning sessions in a prison in many ways is not much different from running sessions in the wider community. There are additional restrictions such as the tools and resources one can use but essentially the sessions are about families learning together and supporting each other. For obvious reasons time has to be given at the beginning of each session for families to greet each other, exchange news etc and time at the end of the session for goodbyes. Other than that sessions should be as much fun and as educational as any other family learning session.




“A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. Actually forgot where I was.”

Father at HMP Pentonville





## Family learning in a prison context: How does this work? What do the sessions look like?



*Who this section will be of interest to:*

Anyone thinking of setting up family learning in a prison and family learning practitioners in particular.

There are of course many different ways that Family Learning can be delivered in a prison context. Below are just a few examples of how they have been delivered at HMP Holloway, HMP Pentonville and HMP Latchmere.

### **HMP Holloway Extended Children's Visits**

These happen on a monthly basis and take place in the gym. There can be from twenty to forty families involved at each visit with the numbers of children varying. The visit starts at 10am on a Saturday morning and the families are asked to get to the visitors' centre for 9.30am. The parent or carer takes the child/children through security to the gym and leaves them with their mother or relative. They are then expected to be collected at 3pm.

The gym is set up with various activities to suit all ages. Table tennis, badminton and football are provided by prison staff for the older children. Connect 4, Jenga, and a reader's corner are other examples of activities provided. One of the facilities at Holloway is the swimming pool and families often have the opportunity to go swimming on these visits. A long table is provided for the family learning activities.

It can sometimes take a while for the children to go through security and as a result the mothers are often waiting anxiously. This time can be used by family learning tutors to go round and show them examples of activities that they can do together as a family and to encourage them to bring their children over to the table once they have settled and had some time together.

The visits often have a theme depending on the time of year. The obvious ones are Christmas time, Mother's day and Valentine's day. Whatever the theme, the activities are designed to engage

the families and get them working together as discussed in a previous chapter. When planning the activities it is essential to ensure that LLN (Language, Literacy and Numeracy) are embedded in them. An element of competition is often added by way of prizes for the most creative poster or the family that has worked best together for example. Gym staff, prison staff and Governors are asked to judge the entries so that everyone gets involved.

One of the aims of the visit is for parents and children to be able to share some pleasurable experiences together. To support this, various organisations have been invited by the LLU+ team to deliver workshops. These include the Science Museum, the London Transport Museum, the British Postal Museum and Archive amongst others. Although some families will have previously accessed these organisations outside of prison, many report not having done so before. This gives the families an invaluable opportunity to explore and develop new skills together.

Below is an example of a session plan:



Supported by



### Session 1

## HMP Holloway Children's Visit Saturday 5th June 2010

#### Aims of the session:

- To engage in an educational parent/child activity
- To introduce participants to the Science Museum
- To improve understanding of some themes in Science

#### Outcomes – at the end of the session participants will have:

- participated in a science workshop
- worked as a family group
- made a hot air balloon
- been introduced to the scientific themes of Forces, Gases and Motion.

As mothers arrive, talk to them about the activities we will be running and encourage them to bring the children over once they have arrived. As parents and children are doing the activities explain the purpose of the attendance sheet and ask them to sign it.

Time	Activity	Comments Assessments methods and differentiation notes/VAKT
9.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One tutor and a volunteer to welcome carers and children as they arrive in the visitors' centre. Explain the activities that they will be doing with their Mums</li> </ul>	
10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hot-air balloon workshop (LLU+ staff to support Science Museum staff)</li> </ul>	VAKT <sup>21</sup> Observation Q&A
11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutor to go round to all women who participated in activity and evaluate the session.</li> </ul>	

**Materials:**

- Provided by Science Museum
- Scissors



<sup>21</sup> VAKT – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile – preferred learning modalities (see Dunn & Dunn Learning Styles approach appendix 2).

### Tutor Evaluation

#### HMP Holloway Children's visit 5 June 2010

3 workshops:

- am hot air balloons
- pm slime time
- pm kitchen science

This visit took lots of preparation and co-ordination prior to the event e.g. security re inventory of equipment, car parking etc.

Each workshop was extremely well received by all ages. We asked all the women as they arrived to sit on the benches so that we could address them all and explain the purpose of the session. There was some grumbling about being treated like children but all complied. When the children came in they immediately noticed that things looked different and showed an interest in what their mothers had already told them about the workshops.

The hot air balloon workshop started slowly with a presentation on Power Point. The instructions for each stage were also quite slow but most of the children managed to keep their interest up and the few who drifted off came back when they saw the finished balloons flying around the gym. Even the most reluctant teenage boy joined in enthusiastically in the end.

There was excellent engagement of all age groups. Every single person took part in at least one activity even the mothers of babies. The activities were particularly good at engaging teenagers which we do not always manage to do. The workshop leaders from the Science Museum abbreviated the Power Point presentation for the second workshop as a result of gauging the audience.

The fact that mothers had been prepared for the workshop on the preceding Thursday played an important part in the success of the event in that the mothers were able to brief their children and explain the activities to them.

Some of the experiments LLU+ staff could run themselves e.g. kitchen science and should include in our book of resources.

The Science Museum team were very keen to be further involved in this project.

#### Recommendations:

- No swimming next time
- Try to obtain email address of PE staff so that we can brief them as to what we will be doing

Comments taken from the participant evaluations:



“I found out doing all this kind of things with them you tend to get more closer to them and ask them questions and share ideas.”



“I think they are very interesting, enjoyable, exciting. It brings our little families together to get on together as little communities.”



“Me and my mum have a laugh when we are making things and I like it when she helps me.”

## **HMP Holloway family learning classes in Resettlement (workshops for parents alone)**

These take place on a weekly basis and last two and a half hours. The aims of these sessions are to help support the women with their children’s learning and development. As with Family Learning in the wider community, the tutors try and make the learning environment as non-threatening as possible by being approachable and flexible. Topics covered range from Learning Styles, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, positive discipline, reward charts, healthy eating, supporting children with their reading and writing, to supporting children with their numeracy. A very popular session is materials making where the mothers can design, laminate and get a book bound for their children. As a result of a group discussion, a session on dyslexia was planned and delivered.

Below is a scheme of work that was designed at the beginning of the project. It was based on a combination of courses that LLU+ runs in the wider community and that are very popular with parents. The tutors involved in the planning also drew from their extensive experiences of delivering sessions in a prison environment whether “on the wing” or on the Children and Family Visits in the gym. As in the wider community, individual participants’ needs were paramount in influencing the detailed programme. Unlike our courses in the wider community however, we could not rely on a group profile due to HMP Holloway being a remand prison and the transient nature of the likely group therefore had to be taken into consideration. As mentioned in a previous chapter, prisoners may come to one session only or attend regularly over several years.

It was agreed that helping the prisoners communicate with their children and play a positive role in their lives should be our overarching concern. Essentially the two central aims were:

- to help participants develop positive outlooks helpful to themselves and others
- to help participants develop learning and communication skills pertinent to their lives and those of their children.

Taking the above into consideration, it was also agreed that the course objectives should be set out in a very flexible form.

By the end of the course regular participants would better understand the value of:

- informal education
- supporting their children in their formal education
- supporting children’s strengths, interests and learning styles
- educating the “whole child”
- positive attitudes and discipline
- formal education for themselves as a parent and individual.

These flexible objectives would ensure that sessions could be adapted or changed to meet the individual needs of the participants.

### Indicative Scheme of Work

Sessions	Content	Mapping to ECM <sup>22</sup> /LARS <sup>23</sup>
1	<p><b>Communication 1 – Introduction</b></p> <p><b>Tutors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce course and session</li> </ul> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss the importance of communication to learning</li> <li>● discuss, record and laminate an experience of family learning (something a child has said/done with its parent + something a parent has done with her child that has given a sense of pleasure and achievement)</li> </ul>	ECM 1.2.3+ LARS 3,5,7
2	<p><b>Communication 2</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● review some points of communication enjoyed with their child/ren at the last children’s visit</li> <li>● analyse the communicative value of sample Valentine cards (Valentine cards will be next children’s visit activity)</li> <li>● write their own personal message to a loved one – using words, visual images and/or decoration to express it</li> </ul>	ECM 1,2,3 LARS 3,5,7

<sup>22</sup> ECM – Every Child Matters (see appendix 1).

<sup>23</sup> LARS – London Area Resettlement Strategy.

Sessions	Content	Mapping to ECM/LARS
3	<p><b>Informal Education 1</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss one thing their child learnt at the last children’s visit and how they learnt it</li> <li>● create an empty room activity – linked to learning styles (LS)</li> <li>● frame a photo of their child to suggest his/her favourite way of learning</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
4	<p><b>Learning Styles</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● answer and discuss LS questionnaire</li> <li>● work on a carousel of LS activities</li> <li>● LS chart</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1.2.3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
5	<p><b>Informal Education 2</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● revise LS by completing <i>Myself as a Learner</i> chart</li> <li>● list some home/prison activities that they could do to support formal (school) learning</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
6	<p><b>Behaviour 1 – The value of praise</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss the value of praise (as they have experienced it)</li> <li>● translate negative to positive language (oral game)</li> <li>● discuss positive discipline (gap fill activity)</li> <li>● make a reward chart</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
7	<p><b>Behaviour 2 – Why children misbehave</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● practise praising/positive parenting (role play activity)</li> <li>● discuss why children misbehave (puzzle)</li> <li>● discuss top ways to be a great parent (using handout)</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>

Sessions	Content	Mapping to ECM/LARS
8	<p><b>Communication 3 – Listening skills</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss the importance of listening</li> <li>● practise the do’s and don’ts of listening (role-play)</li> <li>● design/decorate a “hand” representing five different things they have noticed about their child’s learning/behaviour (careful, has a sense of humour etc). Discuss how they could use the “hand” to encourage their child/ren to talk and listen at the next visiting day</li> <li>● discuss a picture/photo that would encourage a particular child to talk and a parent to listen</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
9	<p><b>Diet and Nutrition 1 – introduction</b></p> <p><b>Participants take part in the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● VAKT food group activities carousel</li> <li>● quiz</li> <li>● Ready, Steady, Cook activity</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
10	<p><b>Diet and Nutrition 2 – materials making</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss appropriate family learning recipes</li> <li>● write out and invitingly decorate one of these for a group family learning recipe book</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS3,5,7</p>
11	<p><b>Communication 4 – Speech and Language development</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● share their own experiences and communication strategies (especially the verbal ones)</li> <li>● review strategies that help small children with their language development</li> <li>● discuss “steps to talking” (through an activity)</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>
12	<p><b>Helping my Child with Reading and Writing 1</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss their favourite children’s books – why they liked them etc</li> <li>● use ‘Death by the Promenade’ activity to help appreciate the difficulties of learning to read</li> <li>● discuss what good readers do when they read</li> <li>● consider the aims and objectives of a particular book they could make with their child/ren</li> </ul>	<p>ECM 1,2,3</p> <p>LARS 3,5,7</p>



Sessions	Content	Mapping to ECM/LARS
13	<p><b>Helping my Child with Reading &amp; Writing 2</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● plan a book for a particular child</li> <li>● list materials needed for book</li> <li>● make a cover for the book (homework for participants and tutors: collect materials for book/s)</li> </ul>	ECM 1,2,3 LARS 3,5,7
14	<p><b>Preparation for Science Museum’s visit</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● complete a true/false quiz about questions children ask</li> <li>● role play and discuss a science experiment – using everyday ingredients – that they could do with their child/ren</li> <li>● review science topics covered at various key stages and how to interest children in them using fun activities at home</li> </ul>	ECM 1,2,3 LARS 3,5,7
15	<p><b>Science Museum Visit</b></p> <p><b>Participants and children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● do practical science activities using everyday ingredients</li> </ul>	ECM 1,2,3 LARS 3,5,7
16	<b>Book making</b>	Ditto
17	Ditto	Ditto
18	Ditto	Ditto
19	Ditto	Ditto
20	<p><b>Course and self assessment</b></p> <p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discuss and complete course evaluation and self assessment forms</li> <li>● discuss progression opportunities</li> </ul>	Ditto

The focus of these workshops is largely dictated by the articulated needs and wishes of the women who attend. Over the three years of the project we have made some continuous adaptations. One example of this is introducing a session on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which has proved to be a great success. The mothers often complain of feeling powerless in prison when it comes to supporting their children. Through exploring the role of the parent and providing a framework for understanding individual needs they are made aware that even in prison they can still play an important role in their children’s lives.



Below is an example of a session plan used in Resettlement.

## Session 6

### Best Start for Families – Resettlement Tuesday 26 November 2009

#### Aims of the session:

- To improve understanding of how a mother can support her children's development
- To have explored Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

#### Outcomes – at the end of the session participants will:

- have recapped on last week's session
- identified what children need from their parents
- distinguished between the different stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how they meet these needs as mothers
- have completed their own Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

As participants arrive, ask them to sign tutor's register and initial their name on the daily register.

Time	Activity	Comments Assessments methods and differentiation notes/VAKT
2.00	<b>Recap</b> Tutor to brainstorm one thing that they learnt from the previous week	VAT
2.10	Tutor introduces visual plan	VA
2.15	<b>Activity 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brainstorm <i>What do children need from their parents?</i></li> <li>● Take feedback and write on flip chart</li> </ul>	VA Observation Q&A VAT
2.35	<b>Activity 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hand out activity sheet with different needs to be placed in respective areas</li> <li>● Feedback – make sure we have answer sheet – discuss answers</li> </ul>	Tutors to scribe for those that need support Observation VAKT
2.50	<b>Activity 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask the group what they think would happen to a child whose needs are not met?</li> <li>● Show diagram of brain and explain that if connections in brain aren't used they die off and can never be made</li> </ul>	VA Observation Q&A
2.55	<b>Activity 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hand out Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs activities and ask the group to have a go at doing it</li> <li>● Feedback and relate back to first activity sheet</li> <li>● How do mothers meet all of these needs – which ones do they find difficult to meet?</li> </ul>	VAT Observation Q&A
3.10	<b>Activity 5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participants to complete their own Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs chart using materials provided</li> </ul>	VAKT Observation Q&A
4.10	<b>Reflective process forms<sup>24</sup></b>	Tutors to scribe for those that need support

<sup>24</sup> See appendix 3.



### Materials:

- Register
- Visual plan
- Handouts
- Flip chart pens
- For practical activity: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs diagrams and pictures
- VAKT activities Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- Reflective process sheet

## Tutor Evaluation

We had three new participants (although one left as she said it was too painful to talk about her children – encouraged her to come to next week's session as we would be making Christmas cards) and three people came in and asked to be put on the list.

Activity 1 worked well and brought up a lively discussion around discipline. Explained that this was a huge topic and would cover it in a future session.

The VAKT activities worked well and got the mums talking. One ESOL participant found the language too difficult and needed 1-1 support.

They enjoyed making their own pyramid and there was some good sharing of experiences. Participants were happy to read out handout to each other. One Mum keen to get back into touch with Women In Prison. Tutor to contact them.

**Next week:** Christmas Carols and cards

Through Reflective Practice sheets and evaluations we are able to identify the learning which takes place during each session.

Here are some examples of comments written by mothers after one of these sessions.



“I can now see my child and show her that I love her and she can achieve anything she wants.”



“I can now play with my kids and learn them about self esteem. Really enjoyed today!”



“I learnt that children need certain things in order to grow and learn. I learnt a lot in this session.”

One of the greatest challenges in family learning is meeting the needs of a varied group and ensuring that tutors are able to provide the necessary LLN (Language, Literacy and Numeracy) support. As previously discussed the need for this support in a prison context is generally even greater than in the wider community. For this reason there are always two tutors working together to facilitate the sessions. Activities are often differentiated or designed for different levels of LLN. Tutors offer to scribe for those that are happy to be given support. However the most important part of the session is the peer-learning that takes place between the participants. The main part of these sessions is the creative component, where the mothers get to design and make a resource for their child/ren based on the topic covered that session. This has proved a very effective means not only to facilitate informal discussions about the educational value of each activity but also to provide an opportunity for the parents to share their emotions and experiences.

### **HMP Pentonville Family Day Visits**

These take place six times a year and are held on a Sunday. Typically 40 families attend and a prisoner must be enhanced (see glossary) to have the privilege of a visit. The whole family needs to go through security before being directed to the visits hall. This can take some time and fathers are often left sitting on their own if their families are late. This provides a good opportunity for the family learning team to go round and explain the activities that will be on offer.

The aims and objectives of the visit are very similar to the Children's Extended Visit as previously discussed. All the activities provided (approximately three per visit) are designed to encourage the families to work together. Again each visit will have a theme that has been decided by the Pentonville Family Liaison Officer, pact staff and the family learning team. Some examples are Fathers' day, Pirates and Springtime. Outside organisations are also invited in and these are always a great success. A city farm even made it through the gates, where Milly and Molly the goats were a big hit.

Each family is allocated a numbered table, where they will find a printed programme for the day's activities, with fixed chairs but unlike in the normal visits the families are allowed to move around. One of the great pleasures for the fathers is for them to be able to go to the refreshment area and buy their children something to eat or drink.

The family learning team set up their materials on tables provided. With the help of volunteers the materials necessary for the given activity are distributed to all the families. They can, of course, come and help themselves to any additional materials but are encouraged to return to their tables and work as a family unit.

Below is a typical session plan.

### Session 1

#### Family Visit Sunday 28th March 2010

##### Aims of the session:

- To work as a family
- To promote the importance of learning through play
- To follow instructions

##### Outcomes – at the end of the session participants will have:

- taken part in a joint family activity
- made a spring flower pot
- used literacy and numeracy skills to make their material
- enjoyed meeting and learning about farm animals

As fathers arrive, talk to them about the activities we will be running and encourage them to work as a family, engaging their children.

Time	Activity	Comments Assessments methods and differentiation notes/VAKT
1pm–4pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Go round to all the Dads showing a previously completed flower pot</li> <li>● Hand out instructions encouraging parents and children to read them together</li> <li>● Tutors to encourage discussion on what are the children’s favourite colour, flower, etc. and what message they are going to write on the card they will attach to the flower pot</li> <li>● pact staff to escort small groups of families to visit the farm animals at the back of the hall during the flower pot making</li> <li>● Tutors to support parents and children where needed</li> </ul>	<p>Involvement with child 3 tutors to give support where necessary and to encourage parents to work with their child/ren VAKT ECM 3 &amp; 4 LARS P3 &amp; P7</p>

**Materials:**

- Tissue paper
- Glue and scissors
- Pens
- Card
- Paper cups
- Strips of ribbon

**Evaluation of Family Visit HMP Pentonville 28th March 2010**

Those who contributed to this evaluation: Family Liaison Officer, PACT staff and volunteers, librarian and LLU+ family learning team.

Generally it was felt that the day was extremely successful and one of the best if not the best.

- one parent was very grateful for poems provided by the librarian
- one family was really pleased to have worked as a family. It was the first time ever they’d worked like that
- even the officers were very positive about the visit
- it was very moving seeing the families looking at the animals together and then building on the idea for their sculptures
- a few dads were supporting each other
- every family was involved
- the men were all very involved especially in making flowers
- lots of families stressed the importance of doing things as a family

- make sure that families in nooks and crannies are not left out
- investigate whether we can use metal scissors – Helen to look at that
- a good and useful collection of evaluations
- the volunteers from pact were really good

Some comments from the evaluations:



“Nice one! It’s good to have something to do during the visit!”



“We learnt that we can all work together as a team.”



“We learnt that it is fun to make things with mummy and daddy and just get messy.”



“It taught me to appreciate my kids more.”

### **Book Club at HMP Pentonville**

This takes place on a Thursday afternoon in a classroom on the wing. The sessions are from 2pm to 4.30 pm and there can be up to ten fathers. The aim of these sessions is for the fathers to make a book for a particular child. All the materials are provided including a laminator and a book binder so that the book can be sent out directly to the children. Pictures, stickers, poems and songs are provided and the prisoners can bring family photos to use in their books. Most of the fathers would have been to “Family Fables” in the morning where they will have recorded themselves reading a story to their child and made them a card. The idea of book club is that they can then reinforce this by making their own personal book for their child. The child will then receive all three items at the same time. Books that have been made recently range from A visit to the Zoo, A trip to Lego Land, A’s Song Book and D’s Special Book – why you are so special.



## Homework Club at HMP Pentonville

This was run for eight consecutive weeks and took place on a Thursday evening from 5pm to 8pm in a room adjacent to the visits room. The family learning staff facilitated these sessions with the help of the prison's Family Liaison Officer, pact staff and the librarian. Ten families were involved and the mothers were encouraged to come along. The ages of the children ranged from 4yrs to 12yrs. The aim of Homework Club was for fathers to engage in their children's education and for the mothers to have some quality time of their own. The families would arrive and spend some time settling together before the mothers were asked to go to the visits room. Here they could either spend some time talking together or have the opportunity to be given an aromatherapy massage by a volunteer who also happened to be a counsellor. Fathers in prison often say that it is not them doing the sentence but their partners and it was felt that the mothers could benefit from this support.

The tutors would then show the fathers and children examples of materials that they would be making together. The activities were all designed to support the children's learning and the fathers were encouraged to take a lead role with the staff involved facilitating. Initially the fathers were a bit hesitant but their confidence grew as the weeks progressed. Books, board games, poems were some examples of materials made.

These sessions proved to be a great success with all members of the family and the feedback was very positive.

## HMP Latchmere House Helping My Child With Reading

HMP Latchmere House is a resettlement prison. The prisoners are all coming to the end of long sentences and leave the prison to go to work in the community every day. This course of 10 weeks was run once at the prison and then once at LLU+, London South Bank University. Both courses took place in the evening, once a week, from 6pm to 8pm as the men were all at work during the day. The course looks at how children learn to read, how they are taught to read in schools, how parents can support their children with their reading as well as learning what activities parents can do with their children at home. At the end of the course the participants handed in portfolios for Open College accreditation.

Some comments made by the fathers who attended the course:



“I now understand that people learn in different ways – not about “naughty” or “good” but different needs and different styles.”



“I wish I had known this stuff before, for my older children.”



“Made me think a bit more about the difficulties children and others have in reading and how to understand that and be able to help.”



“The lesson last week about board games was very good as I later found out that my son did a similar exercise at school and it was great to sit down with him and go through questions for the board game.”

Below is an example of a session plan:

### Session 8

#### Helping My Child With Reading Monday 24th March 2006

##### Aims of the session:

- To evaluate materials made
- To examine the important role played by parents in preparing their children to become readers
- To consolidate ideas on how to listen to children reading
- To recap on the difficulties children who are learning to read may face

##### Outcomes – at the end of the session participants will have:

- evaluated board games/flipchutes
- discussed and filled in sheet on the role of the parent in preparing a child for reading
- completed a sheet on list of things one should do and avoid when listening to children read
- further explored why it can be difficult to learn to read

Time	Activity	Comments Assessments methods and differentiation notes/VAKT
6.00	As participants arrive, ask them to sign tutor's register and initial their name on the daily register.	
6.10	<b>Warm up</b> Participants and tutors to make up a story using story cards. Elicit from participants how this can be useful for children.	VAT Story cards
6.20	<b>Materials Evaluation</b> Participants to fill in sheet on evaluation of materials made – reading.	VAT
6.35	<b>Activity 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask participants to brainstorm what a child should be able to do before s/he can be taught to read</li> <li>● Tutors to write answers on flipchart</li> </ul>	VAT
6.45	<b>Activity 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hand out sheet <i>The Role of the Parent/Carer in Preparing Children for Reading</i></li> <li>● Discuss the questions with the whole group</li> <li>● Ask participants to complete the sheet referring to their own experience in particular</li> </ul>	VAT
7.05	<b>Activity 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hand out sheet <i>Recommendations for Listening to Children Read</i></li> <li>● In pairs, participants to complete the form</li> <li>● Hand out sheet <i>Listening to Young People Read</i> for supplementary reading, making sure that all the points covered on this sheet are included in lists made by participants</li> </ul>	VAT  <i>Recommendations for Listening to Children Read</i> sheets  <i>Listening to Young People Read</i> sheets

Time	Activity	Comments Assessments methods and differentiation notes/VAKT
7.30	<b>Activity 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ask one of the participants to explain to the group how remembering the significance of very small details is crucial to success as a reader</li><li>● Hand out the sheet <i>The Difficulties of Learning to Read</i> and discuss all the questions with the group before asking them to fill it in</li></ul>	VAT <i>The Difficulties of Learning to Read</i> sheets
7.50	<b>Activity 5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hand out <i>Reflective Process</i> sheets and ask participants to complete them</li><li>● Take feedback from one or two participants</li></ul>	<i>Reflective Process</i> sheets

### Materials:

- Registers
- Visual plans
- Story cards
- Handouts
- Biscuits, tea, coffee, milk and sugar



# Getting started

*Who this section will be of interest to:*

The first section of this chapter is aimed at prison governors or officers and other staff working in prisons. The second part of the chapter is aimed at family learning managers who would like to be involved in running family learning in prisons.

How to start depends on who is looking to set up provision.

## Prison staff

As a first step, prison governors, officers, or other prison staff, interested in enhancing the provision for families at their prison would benefit from visiting provision in a range of prisons. If this is not possible then telephone calls, emails and a look at websites would be useful in beginning to think through the type of provision which would suit the particular prison. At this stage it is obviously very important to engage a prison governor in the process as there are financial implications other than those directly related to the delivery of the programme which need to be taken into consideration, e.g. supervising prison officer time. There will also be implications in terms of security etc.

## Deciding which route to take to set up provision

The first and easiest step to take would be to ask people employed in education in the prison whether they have any training and experience in family learning. The person in charge of education may also have contacts directly involved in family learning in the local area. Should this avenue not lead to a useful contact an alternative would be to approach the local education authority, a local organisation involved in the delivery of family learning, a local further education college or adult education organisation. In the first instance it will be necessary to ascertain whether the organisation has existing funding and staff who would be interested in extending their experience by working in a prison setting. Should funding be available from the body approached it is likely that there will be certain criteria and targets to be met. It is important to focus on these at the earliest possible opportunity as they may be impossible to achieve in a prison context.

The likelihood, however, is that these organisations would be interested but will need additional funding to be able to extend their provision. If this is the case the organisation may be prepared to seek funding. On the other hand, as everywhere, organisations are likely to be hard-pressed to find the time to put into a funding application and may ask the prison to do the bulk of this work.

Whoever the organisation making the funding application is, the application will need to be presented as a partnership, often a three way partnership between the organisation providing the family learning expertise, the prison and a charity already involved in working in the prison, as many grant awarding bodies only award funding to charities. To be able to do that there needs to be some careful planning and exploration of the issues from all points of view. For example, the education organisation needs to understand the constraints that a prison imposes on any provision it hosts, whilst the prison needs to understand what family learning is, the criteria provision needs to meet, staffing issues etc. For this reason if the organisation putting in the bid has not already been involved in working in prisons it would be useful to invite them to visit the prison and particularly a social visit and the education department.

The following are points which may provide a useful starting place for discussion with potential family learning partners:

- why does the prison want to offer family learning?
- what kind of provision is envisaged? Is it for adults only, for adults and children throughout or for adults and children separately and then with a joint session for adults and children?
- if the sessions are to involve children is there an envisaged age range of the children? Will there be a crèche for younger children? Will there be provision for older children?
- will children's carers be involved or simply the children and their imprisoned parent? If the latter is the case does any provision need to be made for the carer who brings the child/ren to the prison?
- what kind of family learning provision is envisaged i.e. wider family learning or family literacy, language or numeracy (see chapter 1)?
- how frequently can sessions be held?
- where will sessions take place? If literacy, language or numeracy are to form part of the aim of the project there needs to be provision for participants to be able to write at adult sized tables, not the little coffee-type tables often provided in social visits.
- which prisoners will be involved? Will it be open to all parents or simply to enhanced privileges parents?
- what is the average length of stay at the prison? This will be a factor to be considered when planning the length of the course and the pattern of delivery, i.e. will it run once a week for ten weeks, or once a month?
- what day of the week is envisaged? If children are involved this is a particularly important question unless the provision is only planned for school holidays...
- what length of time is envisaged? The sessions need to be long enough for parents and children to have some personal time as well as take part in family learning activities?

- what is the envisaged timing for the day? Will families be able to arrive in time if they are travelling from far? If the activities are taking place over a whole day will hot meals be provided?
- what numbers are envisaged? How many families? How many adults? How many children?
- will the funding have to cover prison officer time as well as family learning staff?
- does the funding need to cover costs for family learning staff to attend prison training?
- will prison staff need any family learning training? What role will prison officers be expected to play? Are there any cost implications?
- are there volunteers who could be trained to support the family learning activities?
- who will be involved in the planning of the activities/programme?

Funding organisations are often keen on potential beneficiaries of projects being consulted on the need for and type of proposed provision. It may be necessary to draw up a questionnaire for visitors or prisoners to complete asking them for their ideas.

Once these questions have been explored an outline plan of the provision envisaged as well as costs can begin to be drawn up and sources of possible funding can be identified.

Another route for prison staff to take to set up family learning in a prison would be to apply for the funding directly and to appoint family learning tutors to deliver the provision. It is very important, if this route is chosen, that the right people are appointed to take the lead in family learning. The following are some of the criteria which should be used in selecting tutors:

- tutors must be qualified to teach adults or be very experienced in working with adults in a family learning setting
- tutors must have been trained to deliver family learning
- tutors must be experienced in running family learning
- if children are to be involved in the programme it is important that at least one of the tutors has experience and qualifications for working with children
- if the provision has a language, literacy or numeracy focus tutors should have an ESOL, adult literacy or adult numeracy qualification
- tutors must have been trained in literacy, language and numeracy awareness
- tutors should have training and experience in supporting adults with a wide range of learning needs particularly language, literacy, numeracy and dyslexia
- tutors should have experience and training in supporting children with a wide range of needs including behavioural needs and learning difficulties
- all involved must naturally be CRB checked



### Before you start

#### Training for supporting staff and prison officers

Once the funding has been obtained, before the provision is set up it is important to provide family learning training for all those who will be involved including prison officers.

The minimum training for prison officers should include the following:

- what is family learning?
- why family learning in a prison is important?
- what are the aims of your particular project?

The training for volunteers and any other members of staff who will be involved in supporting the delivery of the project should include the same training provided for the prison officers plus the following:

- key features of good family learning provision
- expected outcomes of the project
- understanding of the barriers which may prevent parents from taking part in educational activities with their children
- understanding of the reasons why adults may have difficulties with literacy, language or numeracy
- language, literacy and ESOL awareness training
- training in record keeping as is required by particular projects

At this point it would be useful to order a stock of standard family learning materials for the project. This will include:

- white and coloured A3 and A4 paper
- white and coloured A3 and A4 coloured card
- tissue paper in a range of colours
- a laminator which can take A3 and smaller pouches
- laminating pouches A3, A4 and A5
- a book binder
- plastic combs for book binding
- scissors (depending on the prison's policy) and craft scissors if allowed (don't forget a few left-handed scissors)
- glue
- stickers and glitter
- thin and thick felt pens, colouring pencils, pencils and writing pens
- rubbers and rulers
- access to a computer with colour printer is invaluable



## Family learning managers wanting to extend their provision to include prisons

If you have a local prison and would like to explore the possibility of setting up family learning provision there the first step is to find someone you can begin to have a dialogue with. This can be easier said than done. In prisons where family learning already exists it can come under a range of different areas such as education, children and families, resettlement or even security for example.

The following are different avenues you could explore to get in touch with the key person in terms of setting up family learning:

**The prison's education department** – they are more likely to have some understanding of the concept of family learning and therefore be able to direct you to the most appropriate governor.

**An existing family learning project in another prison** – this may lead you to someone who can put you in touch with the most appropriate person in the prison where you want to work.

**Local provider of prison education** – usually a local education college who may be able to help.

**Governor responsible for the children and families pathway to reducing reoffending** – this person could be key to you getting in touch with the right person, or might even be the right person.

**Head/manager of Learning and Skills at the prison** – each prison has one of these and they can also be very helpful.

**The organisation running the prison's visitors centre** – this could be a useful source of information and contacts.

**Charities and other organisations already working in the prison** – find out which charities are working in the prison and get in touch with them for ideas and names as to whom you could contact. The following are charities which do a lot of work in prisons: St Giles Trust, Hibiscus, pact, Clean Break, Inside-Out, Apex Trust to name just a few.

At this point it is worth emphasising again that everything takes time in a prison, so patience and persistence are essential.

Once you have made contact you may, if you are lucky, be invited for a meeting, or you may simply be sent an alliance proposal form, a lengthy document asking for information about your proposed project. If at all possible ask for a meeting prior to completing the form as it will be very difficult for you to complete some of the sections without first having explored points such as would a course or individual activity days be more appropriate to this particular prison.

When you manage to set up a meeting time prepare well for your meeting (and don't forget to bring your passport!). It is worth thinking about how family learning will benefit this prison and also providing evidence on the impact of family learning in other prisons. However, be careful, you will constantly be reminded that each prison is different, and what can happen in one cannot, necessarily, happen in another. If you have a colleague who has already worked in prisons it may

be worth bringing that person along with you. When you present your evidence avoid appearing 'fluffy' (a term we have heard on several occasions) i.e. acknowledge that prisons are a tough environment, that you have a lot to learn and that miracles rarely take place! Ensure that the person you are meeting with understands that both you and your staff are more than willing to undergo any training offered by the prison service.

This will probably be only the first of many meetings. Prior to starting it would be worth spending a day in education or resettlement to get a feel of the environment. You will need to find out either from the person you will be directly liaising with in the prison or from security what tools and resources you will have access to, what you will be able to bring into the prison, what the prison can give you access to etc. You will also need to find out whether you will be expected to carry keys or not. You should not start working in the prison until you have attended training offered by the prison particularly around security.

Be prepared for a long interval between your first meeting and the project delivery starting. Apart from waiting for appropriate training to be offered, you will need enhanced security clearance which can take a while both to fill in the forms and to achieve clearance. If you can, use the time to visit other family learning provision taking place in prisons. But bear in mind that what is allowed in one prison may not be allowed in another. Each prison is different.

The day has come, you are trained, you have security clearance and you are ready to start. Be prepared for the unexpected. This could include an audit which means prisoners are not allowed out of their cells, a security alert which means you cannot go into the prison, your materials are still in the post room and you will not be able to access them today etc. Alternatively everything could go as planned, you have the right number of families/learners, everyone arrives on time etc and there is someone at hand should you need any help. Introduce yourself to staff so that they know who you are and why you are there. At some point you may find their support invaluable. Above all enjoy the challenge of working in this rewarding environment.

## Possible funding sources

Below is a list of some funding sources. Many will only fund registered charities. For this reason it may be necessary, and also beneficial, to form a partnership with a registered charity. Many registered charities already work in prisons and may well be open to new ways of working with prisons.

### Abbey Charitable Trust

The Santander Foundation funds national, regional and local charities for their work within the UK. They are committed to helping disadvantaged people through their two charitable priorities: education and training and financial capability.

<http://www.santanderfoundation.org.uk>

### **Antigone/Martha Lane Fox's Foundation**

Antigone/Martha Lane Fox's Foundation supports charities from the education, health, and criminal justice sectors working with disadvantaged groups. It supports charities use of web and mobile technologies. Applicants are judged on the following criteria:

- project will improve people's lives
- project is managed by dedicated people
- project has the ambitions for developing work on a bigger scale.

<http://www.marthalanefox.com>

### **Dulverton Trust, The**

The Dulverton Trust supports a range of activities in the following categories:

- youth education
- general welfare
- environment – in particular conservation
- preservation
- peace and humanitarian support
- Africa

<http://www.dulverton.org>

### **Esmee Fairburn Foundation**

The Esmee Fairburn Foundation's main fund addresses gaps in provision and tests out new ideas or practices.

They also have a funding strand for activities that improve education and learning.

<http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk>

### **Garfield Weston Foundation, The**

The Garfield Weston Foundation supports a wide range of organisations and activities that meet their guidelines. Recent funding has supported projects in the following areas:

- arts
- community
- education
- welfare
- religion
- youth
- environment

<http://www.garfieldweston.org>

### **Lankelly Chase Foundation, The**

The Lankelly Chase Foundation supports work with disadvantaged groups. The Lankelly Chase Foundation works to promote change which will improve the quality of people's lives. It focuses particularly on areas of social need to help the most disadvantaged in society to fulfil their potential.

<http://www.lankellychase.org.uk>

### **Lloyds TSB Foundation, The**

The Lloyds TSB Foundation offers funding through its Community programme:

This focuses on funding core work that helps disadvantaged people to play a fuller role in the community.

<http://www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk>

### **Paul Hamlyn Foundation**

Social justice scheme aims to integrate marginalised individuals and communities. Projects should support younger people up to the age of 30 who are at a time of transition because of their circumstances (e.g. leaving care or prison or settling into a new community), or changes to the cultural environment in which they live (e.g. established communities in refugee dispersal areas).

<http://www.phf.org.uk>

### **Porticus UK**

Porticus UK supports activities in the following areas:

- Strengthening family relationships
- Enriching education

<http://www.porticusuk.com>

### **Tesco Charity Trust Community Awards**

Tesco Charity Trust Community Awards fund activities that support:

- young people/children's welfare and education, including special needs
- people with disabilities

<http://www.tescocharitytrustcommunityawards-applications.co.uk>

### The Triangle Trust 1949

The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund supports activities that maintain an inclusive society or promote integration of groups into society. The funding covers project and core costs, and priority is given to organisations that serve residents in a particular locality. The funding is targeted at:

- carers
- community arts and education (where no statutory sources of funding)
- disability
- poverty alleviation
- integration and rehabilitation

<http://thetriangletrust1949fund.org.uk>

### The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation supports the following activities:

- community support
- health care and disability
- education
- arts

<http://www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk>

### Woodward Charitable Trust

The Woodward Charitable Trust, one of Sainsbury's charitable trusts, funds charities and schools to deliver the following activities and support the following groups:

- Social and ethnic minority groups, including young people at risk of exclusion or isolation, refugees, asylum-seekers, gypsies and travellers
- Prisoners, ex-offenders, and prisoners' families
- Addiction

<http://www.woodwardcharitabletrust.org.uk>

### Young Roots – Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund through their Young Roots programme supports 13–25 year olds to develop an understanding of their heritage, and provide them with skills, confidence, and opportunity to engage with their community.

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/youngroots.aspx>





# Appendix 1

## Useful vocabulary

<b>adjudication</b>	A mini trial held in a prison if a prisoner has breached a regulation. The trial is overseen by a prison governor.
<b>app</b>	Application. Prisoners have to apply for support and access to services by means of an application system. For example, a prisoner will make a request to attend family learning classes by completing a Resettlement application form (when the classes are held in Resettlement).
<b>association</b>	A period of time during which prisoners can meet up with other prisoners for leisure activities. It is also usually during this time that they can use the telephone.
<b>C &amp; R</b>	Control and Restraint – is used by prison officers to restrain a prisoner who is a risk to others or himself.
<b>canteen</b>	Prisoners make a weekly shopping list from a list provided by the prison. Their goods are sold to them at a price fixed by the prison service. In some prisons parents can save their canteen for their visiting children.
<b>CARATS</b>	Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare Scheme – a programme for prisoners with drug and alcohol abuse problems.
<b>Category A, B, C, D</b>	‘A’ a prison which is very secure because the prisoners are deemed to be very dangerous to the public; ‘B’ a prison with a high degree of security; ‘C’ is for prisoners who cannot be trusted in a more open prison but who are unlikely to try to escape; ‘D’ for prisoners who can reasonably be trusted. Category ‘D’ prisons are usually more open than other prisons.
<b>civilian</b>	Not everyone working in a prison is a prison officer. Prisons employ ‘civilians’ for a range of duties including administration. Other civilians in a prison will include staff employed by charities and other organisations working with prisoners, e.g. Hibiscus which looks after the needs of foreign nationals and St Giles Trust which works with prisoners to reduce re-offending.
<b>coms room</b>	Prison officers are able to communicate with each other by means of portable radios (Walkie Talkies) via Radio net. The coms room is where this means of communication is controlled. Holders of sets are identified by a designated radio call sign e.g. Sierra 1, Alpha 2.

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<b>conditioning</b>	Whilst many prisoners are no different to work with in a family learning setting than parents and carers in the wider community, it is important to remember that some are very skilled at manipulation and what prisons call ‘conditioning’. They will subtly and gently change the relationship so that they can exert pressure on a tutor, prison officer etc and require them to take part in illicit activities such as carrying a message out of the prison for someone, posting a letter, or become involved in illegal activity.
<b>convicted</b>	A convicted prisoner is someone who has been sentenced.
<b>CTLLS</b>	Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector – a teaching qualification for those who teach adults as a small part of their job. They will usually be following a programme or session plan provided for them.
<b>DTLLS</b>	Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector – the full qualification for teaching adults.
<b>Every Child Matters</b>	Every Child Matters is a set of reforms supported by the Children Act 2004. Its aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.
<b>enhanced privileges</b>	(See IEPS below). There are three regime levels: basic, standard and enhanced. Being on enhanced privileges can mean you are allowed additional visits or in some cases be allowed to work outside the prison.
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages – this usually refers to classes for people who are learning English.
<b>estate (as in the secure estate)</b>	Is an expression used to refer to prisons.
<b>family visits</b>	Special visits for children, and sometimes their carers, to spend time with an imprisoned parent. These are usually more relaxed than social visits. In some prisons these are reserved for enhanced privileges prisoners.
<b>FLLN</b>	Family Literacy Language and Numeracy – funding for each of these is provided by the Skills Funding Agency.
<b>Foreign Nationals</b>	Prisoners who are not British citizens.
<b>free flow</b>	Periods of time during the day when prisoners can move from one area of the prison to another, e.g. from their wing to education.
<b>governor</b>	A prison service operational manager. Number one governor runs the prison. There are several other governors with specific posts of responsibility under number 1 governor.

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<b>IEPS</b>	Incentives and earned privileges scheme (IEPS). The aims of the IEPS are, <i>“to encourage responsible behaviour by prisoners; to encourage hard work and other constructive activity by prisoners; to encourage sentenced prisoners to progress through the prison system; and to create a more disciplined better controlled and safer environment for prisoners and staff.”</i> Under this scheme prisoners are classified as basic, standard or enhanced privileges.
<b>landing</b>	Prisons have residential blocks or wings which can be over several floors. Each floor is referred to as a landing.
<b>legal visits</b>	A visit to a prisoner by one of their legal team.
<b>life sentence</b>	This means imprisonment for life, but very few prisoners are actually never released. The sentencing judge will issue a minimum tariff which the prisoner has to serve. After that a parole board may deem the prisoner to be safe for release. If they are released they are on parole for the rest of their lives and can be recalled to prison at any time.
<b>Listeners</b>	Prisoners who are selected and trained by the Samaritans to listen to and support other prisoners.
<b>lock down</b>	This is when prisoners are locked in their cells. A lock down can also occur if there is an incident. This can mean all visitors and staff having to remain where they are until everyone has been accounted for.
<b>OASys</b>	Offender Assessment System is a national standardised process for the assessment of prisoners.
<b>operational officer</b>	A prison officer who works with prisoners performing daily duties as opposed to an office based officer.
<b>pact</b>	Prison Advice and Care Trust – a national agency which works with prisoners and their families. Many prison visitors’ centres are run by pact.
<b>PTLLS</b>	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector – the first step in training for people wanting to qualify to teach adults.
<b>regime</b>	The rules governing the management of each particular prison.
<b>remand</b>	A remand prisoner is a prisoner who has not yet been sentenced.
<b>resettlement</b>	Preparing prisoners for release into the community. As part of resettlement prisoners will be given advice on housing, benefits, employment, etc. It may also be a special section of the prison.
<b>segregation</b>	This is when a prisoner is kept in a separate part of the prison away from other prisoners either as punishment or for protection.
<b>SFA</b>	Skills Funding Agency – funds a lot of family learning in the community and in prisons.

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<b>states of alert</b>	At the entrance of each prison the current state of alert will be displayed... It reflects risks, i.e. threats, vulnerability and impact. The response levels are Normal, Heightened and Exceptional.
<b>suicide watch</b>	When a prisoner is thought to be in danger of committing suicide a special folder is set up for them and follows them throughout the day. Family learning tutors will be expected to write a comment in folders on how the prisoner appeared to them during their session.
<b>Sure Start Children's Centres</b>	These are centres based in the community for parents of children under 5. Typically these centres will provide a range of free activities for parents and their children including baby massage, playgroups, family health advice, etc. They will also usually run a crèche and or nursery.
<b>tariff</b>	The minimum period of imprisonment a judge has said a prisoner with a life sentence must serve before being able to apply to a parole board for release. The prisoner must prove that the risk of harm s/he poses to the public is acceptable before being released.
<b>Toe by Toe</b>	A structured scheme used for prisoners to teach other prisoners to read.
<b>VO</b>	Visiting Order – a special form which has to be completed for each visit to a convicted prisoner.
<b>WFL</b>	Wider Family Learning – family learning courses or activities which do not have a specific focus on literacy, language or numeracy. Some funding for these activities is provided through the Skills Funding Agency.
<b>wing</b>	An area of the prison where the prisoners reside. These areas are also referred to as residential blocks or units.
<b>YOI</b>	Young Offenders Institution – a prison for young people aged 18–21.

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## Appendix 2

### The Dunn and Dunn learning styles approach

LLU+ at London South Bank University has been pioneering work in the field of individual learning styles since the 1990's. We have been particularly influenced by the Ken Dunn & Rita Dunn approach as it is holistic and avoids the narrow and limiting categorisation of learners and acknowledges the importance of a wide range of factors that influence learning. It enables learners to reflect not only on the type of learner they are but also to maximise their learning by creating the optimum learning conditions around themselves.

The Dunn and Dunn model is divided into five strands each of which is subdivided into elements which can influence learning, some of which are biologically determined and can change over time e.g. the need for a lot of light, whilst others are environmentally determined. Many of us have learnt behaviour so as to succeed within the boundaries of the education system but given the opportunity to experiment find that, for example, a bit of music or sitting on the sofa rather than at a table can enhance learning or work performance. Most people are influenced by between 6–14 of these elements. That means that they have a strong preference one way rather than another e.g. to be able to work effectively they need to have the teacher very close to them, whilst for others this element may not be of any significance.

It is said that the traditional system of education which caters primarily for the needs of auditory, sequential and visual learners only meets the learning styles needs of 25% of learners. It is therefore very important for those of us working with adults within an educational context to develop strategies and materials that meet the needs of all learners.

The model is divided into five strands:

- the environmental strand
- the emotional strand
- the social strand
- the physical strand
- the psychological strand

Each of these strands is divided into elements.

**The environmental strand** focuses on the environment in which learning and work takes place and consists of 4 elements. The first is **sound**: some learners may need background noise such as music to be able to concentrate whilst others may find they are unable to concentrate in anything but the quietest conditions. **Light**: some people need a lot of light whilst others find working in dim light much more restful and effective. **Temperature**: this can be a very important element for some learners who need to feel warm to be able to concentrate on learning, whereas others may want to wear a tee shirt and have the windows open even in mid-winter. The design factor can be a contentious one within the traditional classroom. In any class approximately 40% of learners would be better able to work in a less formal **design** environment such as sitting on sofas or cushions on the floor. However, the traditional table and chair still suit some learners.

**The emotional strand** looks at the emotional aspect of learning. **Motivation** is dependent on many factors. Some people are self-motivated whilst others really appreciate external encouragement and rewards. **Persistence** looks at the learner's need to continue with one task until it is completed or to change tasks frequently to maximise performance. The element of responsibility refers to whether we are generally followers of rules, rule breakers or rule makers i.e. whether we conform or not. The final element in this strand is **structure**. Some of us need very clear and precise instructions whilst others are satisfied by brief guidelines or prompts.

**The social strand** concentrates on how we like to learn. Do we like to **work in pairs**, in **small groups** or as **part of a team**? Do we want a **teacher or expert near us** to refer to all the time, or do we generally prefer to be left to work on our own, calling on the teacher only when we need them? Alternatively we may want to work in a **different way** on different days.

The 4 elements in the **physical strand** look at which is our preferred modality, i.e. are we **visual**, **auditory**, **kinaesthetic** or **tactile** learners. Additionally, for some of us, the time of day during which we can give of our best is very different. Some of us prefer to focus on intellectual work early in the morning whilst others prefer the middle of the night. The need for frequent **intake** of food and chewing is very important for some individuals and aids concentration. Others need to remain **mobile** whilst concentrating and will find a way of doing so, despite the teacher's best efforts, by standing up to open or shut a window, volunteering to hand out sheets or turn on lights, swinging on their chairs etc...

The final strand, **the psychological strand**, looks at whether a learner is a **global learner**, i.e. someone who needs to work from the whole picture to the detail, or an **analytic learner**, i.e. someone who can work from the detail to the whole picture. The element of **hemisphericity** is also important. Is a learner predominantly left hemisphere dominant or right? Lastly we need to know whether we are **impulsive** or **reflective** learners. Do we act on impulse and jump at opportunities or do we need to take time to reflect before taking action?

It is very important for all teachers and learners to remember that all ways of learning are valid and should be respected. A learning style is, "as individual as a signature. No learning style is better or worse than any other style<sup>25</sup>". And finally to paraphrase Ken Dunn, "If learners don't learn the way we teach them, we must teach them the way they learn".

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<sup>25</sup> Rita Dunn & Ken Dunn, Learning Styles Network.



# Appendix 3

## Reflective process

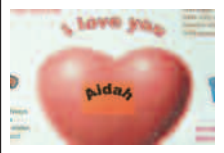



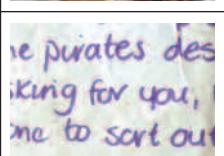
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Today's topics \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Make a record of one or more of the following:

### Record your ideas here

	Something I learnt today:
	Something I found particularly interesting:
	Something I would like to know more about:
	Something I can do now:
	Something I'm not sure about:





## Appendix 4

### Prohibited items

All prisons will display a list of prohibited items. This list will vary from prison to prison. Below are the items that are listed on most prison prohibited items list. It is important to check with a prison which items are prohibited prior to attending.

- Controlled drugs
- Explosives or firearms, imitation or toy firearms
- Alcohol
- Mobile telephones or pagers
- Electronic equipment, e.g. laptops, portable e-readers, memory sticks
- Cameras
- Chewing gum, blu-tack, wax, play dough, plasticine – these could be used to make imprints of keys, block locks, etc
- Cigarettes or tobacco, lighters or matches
- Glass bottles
- Aerosols such as deodorant, hair spray, etc
- Objects that could be used as a weapon or could be adapted to become a weapon, e.g. nail files, scissors
- Foil
- Wire including pipe cleaners
- Money in notes
- Excessive amounts of jewellery
- Scarves
- String or rope

Staff working in prisons will need to liaise closely with security re equipment and resources they would like to bring into the prison. Very often items which may be prohibited for the general public may be allowed for someone working at the prison but under controlled conditions.

### Other consideration

Family and children's days often take place over a whole day so staff will need to bring in food. In many prisons this is allowed providing the food is sealed and traceable, i.e. the packaging is not opened and there is a label saying where the food was bought, e.g. sandwiches from Marks and Spencer would be allowed if the packaging is intact. Other prisons may be more flexible about the food staff are allowed to bring in.

### Dress code

Most prisons will have a dress code for visitors and some for civilian staff as well. Revealing clothing such as miniskirts or low cut blouses are an example of what not to wear. Some prisons insist on non-slip, covered footwear so no sandals. Most prisons prohibit the wearing of hoods.



## Appendix 5

### Resources and activities for staff training/CPD

#### What is family learning?

Below are PowerPoint slides with some useful definitions of family learning.



#### Family Learning is

- “specifically designed to enable adults and children to learn together or ... programmes that enable parents/carers to learn how to support their children’s learning.”
- “as varied as families themselves, (it involves) intergenerational learning based on kinship, however defined.” (*Alexander and Clyne 1995*)



- “It includes learning about roles, relationships and responsibilities in relation to stages of family life; parenting education; and learning how to understand, take responsibility and make decisions in relation to wider society, in which the family is a foundation for citizenship.” (*Campaign for Learning*)



### **Family Literacy, Language, Numeracy – FLLN and Wider Family Learning**

#### **Overarching Aims:**

- **Develop the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants**
- **Help parents/carers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support**



- **The aims of FLNN are to:**
  - **Improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents;**
  - **Improve parent's ability to help their children;**
  - **Improve children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy**

## Why family learning in a prison?

Ask colleagues to think of all the reasons they can think of for why family learning would be particularly important for families affected by imprisonment. When taking feedback ensure that the following are covered:

- families affected by imprisonment are particularly vulnerable
- prisoners' children are prone to mental illness, feelings of guilt, truanting from school, low self-esteem, etc
- maintaining family ties during a term of imprisonment is directly linked to reducing re-offending
- many children of prisoners are raised in families where knowledge of their needs and how to meet them are limited (drugs, alcohol and mental illness all impact on ability to parent)
- low literacy and numeracy levels among prisoners

Below are PowerPoint slides with some useful statistics.

**Why family learning in a prison context**

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LLU+ Tessa Giffin & Foufou Savitzky

**because**

- 66 per cent of women and 59 per cent of men in prison have dependent children younger than 18
- 33% of women in prison have a child under 5
- Around 70% of sentenced prisoners suffer two or more mental health problems

### and because

- 20% of prisoners have been in the care system as children compared to 2% of the general population
- "Evidence demonstrates that over half of offenders (58%) will be reconvicted within two years of discharge from prison, but research shows that prisoners who maintain strong family ties whilst they are in prison are up to six times less likely to re-offend" (from [www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk))

### and because

- 48% of prisoners are at or below the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, 82% in writing
- 7% of children will experience their father's imprisonment during their time in school
- A Home Office study revealed that, for 85% of mothers, prison was the first time they had been away from their children for a significant time
- it is estimated that 35% of prisoners' children report mental health issues in comparison with just 10% of all children

### and finally because

- A growing body of research shows that children with fathers in prison experience raised levels of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of concentration, lowered academic performance, increased truanting, running away from home, juvenile delinquency, and are at an increased likelihood for later becoming incarcerated themselves (Gabel & Johnston 1995, Boswell & Wedge 2002, Farrington, 2002)
- "Prisoners' families hold the key to re-offending," Lucy Gampell, Director of Action for Prisoners' Families

## Are these family learning?

Below are descriptions of activities. decide which qualify as family learning activities.



### Model 1:

**Pirates and princesses family fun day at HMP** – this special day will provide you and your children with an opportunity to spend quality time together. Your children should arrive at the prison visitors' centre by nine thirty. They will join you in the prison gym at around 10 o'clock and will remain with you until 3 o'clock. A wide range of activities will be provided on the theme of pirates and princesses. Your children will have the opportunity to:

- have their faces painted by a professional make-up artist who usually works in West End theatres
- dress up as a pirate or a princess
- spend their excess energy on the bouncy castle
- play five aside football with our gym staff
- use our soft play area
- join us at our arts and crafts table to make a treasure box



### *Model 2:*

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**Family gardening** – want to grow your own vegetables, have a garden full of beautiful flowers? Come and join our family gardening club which takes place in the allotment area of the park every Saturday afternoon. Each family will be given their own small plot and will work with a specialist gardener who will show them useful techniques, introduce them to different plants and help them to grow plants from seeds. At the end of each afternoon children will have their very own cooking session with a famous TV chef whilst their parents enjoy a free massage, reflexology or an aroma therapy session. A crèche will be provided for children aged three and under.

### *Model 3:*

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**Family Chinese calligraphy workshops** – If you are between the ages of five and 14 years and want to have a go at Chinese calligraphy to impress your friends or simply develop new skills join us on Saturdays. We will also offer activities for parents who want to join us so that they too can enjoy their time to the full.

### *Model 4:*

---

**Do you speak another language at home?** If so come to a new course to learn all about the advantages of bilingualism and how to help your children speak your language and English. A crèche will be provided for pre-school children who will join us for the last half-hour of each session for our song time.

Course starts on Tuesday 17th May and runs every Tuesday for six weeks 9.30–12.30.

### *Model 5:*

---

**ICT for Parents at Medora School** – Ever wanted to use a computer but afraid to have a go? Come and join our beginner class. The class will run every Friday from 9.30 –2.30 (lunch and a free crèche will be provided). There will be a total of 6 sessions. You will learn how to use a computer to make a book for your child, to download photographs, to shop online, to email, to find useful websites for children and much more. Each week you will be given homework to do on the computer at home with your child. Each participant will be lent a laptop to take home for the duration of the course.

### *Model 6:*

---

**Our Stories at HMP** -- Once a month during our Saturday social visits you can listen to our world famous story-teller who will take you on exciting journeys to new countries, who will help you fight off giants and dragons and turn you into a hero. You will make masks, posters and cards to go with the stories.

Parents: your children will be able to take part in this unique opportunity which will take place at one end of the visit's hall. You will be able to observe them from your tables and later they can share their stories with you. This will give you a little private time with your partner and will keep the children happy and busy not too far away from you.

### Answers:

**Model 1: Pirates and Princesses fun day at HMP** – this is **not** family learning. The activities are aimed at children and there isn't an emphasis on parents taking part in the activities with their children. For example the face painting is being done to the child, presumably at a table away from the family by someone not related to the child. There does not appear to be an opportunity for families to learn together or for parents and children to develop their skills and knowledge together. There is no intergenerational element.

**Model 2: Family gardening** – this is a family learning activity. There are opportunities for parents and children together to develop their knowledge of gardening and, through that, for parents to support their children's learning. The sessions for the children with the TV chef do not detract from the family learning element of the programme. The programme is intergenerational.

**Model 3: Family Chinese calligraphy workshops** – this is **not** a family learning programme. The activities provided are primarily focussed at children and young people. The activities for adults do not form an intrinsic part of the programme, are voluntary and do not have an aim of adults learning so as to support their child's learning. There is no intergenerational element.

**Model 4: Do you speak another language at home?** This is a family learning programme. The aim is to enable adults to support children's bilingualism. The intergenerational element is also present in the joint singing session which takes place at the end of each adult only session.

**Model 5: ICT for Parents at Medora School** – this is a family learning activity. The intergenerational element is provided through the homework activity and also through some of the class work learning e.g. making a book for a child, finding useful websites for children.

**Model 6: Our Stories at HMP** – this is **not** family learning because the activities provided are entirely focussed on children and young people. For many families there will not be an intergenerational element as there is no structure to ensure that the children share their stories with adults.

### Review work your organisation is currently involved in

Identify activities or programmes your organisation currently provides for families and decide whether the activities would qualify as family learning activities. If they do not, how could they be modified to qualify as family learning?





## Appendix 6

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## Appendix 7

### Useful organisations and websites

#### The British Postal Museum and Archive

<http://postalheritage.org.uk/collections/archive/stamps>

#### Campaign for Learning

<http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk>

#### Care for the Family

Care for the Family is a national charity which aims to promote strong **family life** and to **help those who face family difficulties**.

<http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk>

#### DirectGov

To find a school or children's centre

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Dio11/DoltOnline/DG\\_10034063](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Dio11/DoltOnline/DG_10034063)

#### The Drawing Shed

The Drawing Shed is an ongoing participatory project which evolves as artists make new works on, or in a shed, painted with blackboard paint.

<http://www.projectspeaceleeds.org.uk>

#### Learning Unlimited

As from 31st July 2011 LLU+ will no longer be situated at London South Bank University. To contact any of the contributors to this books or for training etc visit: [www.learningunlimited.co](http://www.learningunlimited.co), email [info@learningunlimited.co](mailto:info@learningunlimited.co) or telephone 020 7911 5561

#### Hibiscus

The Female Prisoners Welfare Project (FPWP) is a registered charity established in 1986 to provide support for females of all ethnic origins and nationalities within the UK criminal justice system. Hibiscus is a branch of FPWP and was set up in 1991 to address the special needs of foreign national women imprisoned in the UK.

<http://fpwphibiscus.org.uk/>

### **Learning Styles Network**

<http://www.learningstyles.net>

### **London Transport Museum**

<http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk>

### **Museum of London**

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/>

### **National Family Learning Network**

<http://www.familylearningnetwork.com/>

### **NIACE**

Provides training and publications for family learning

<http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/area/family-learning>

### **The Prison Advice and Care Trust – pact**

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (pact) is a charity which supports people affected by imprisonment. It provides practical and emotional support to prisoners' children and families, and to prisoners themselves.

<http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

### **Science Museum**

<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk>

### **Skills Funding Agency**

<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk>

### **St Giles Trust**

St Giles Trust aims to break the cycle of offending, crime and disadvantage and create safer communities.

<http://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/>

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