



South West Scotland
Community
Justice
Authority

Launch of Family Contact Card

Support Information for Families at Point of Arrest

Kilmarnock Police Station – Wednesday, 16 May 2012



Background

South West Scotland Community Justice Authority's Family Strategy Group recognises both the important role families can play in preventing their loved one from reoffending and also that they have support needs in their own right.

Having a family member arrested and imprisoned is a traumatic event, especially when family members see it happening. For children, witnessing arrests and police searches can be especially terrifying and have long reaching consequences. Children who are able to understand may be devastated to see a family member being taken away from them and 'disappearing', while younger children and babies will sense the heightened emotional tension in the household.

An estimated 16,500 children each year in Scotland are separated from a parent by imprisonment. This means that each year, more children in Scotland experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce. Approximately one third of children witness their parent's arrest.

In recognition of the stress and anxiety following arrest, a working group of representatives from South West Scotland CJA Family Strategy Group comprising representatives from the Police, the Lighthouse Foundation and Families Outside developed a contact card which arresting officers will leave with family members when an individual is arrested at home. The cards contain contact details of sources of support and information the family may require at any point consequent to an arrest. Local Helpline details include Police Stations, Social Work and the Lighthouse Foundation; national helplines include Families Outside, Parentline and Scottish Families Affected by Drugs.

Whilst this information is available from other sources, what is unique is that they are pulled together in one place in this card and that the police will actively promote it at the point of arrest, a time which can be a frightening and bewildering time for families and children.

Summary of Launch

On Wednesday, 16 May 2012 the card was officially launched by the Family Strategy Group. The Group was pleased to welcome to the launch Mary Fee MSP, in her capacity of Convenor of the Cross-Party Group on Families Affected by Imprisonment. Margaret McDougall MSP, Vice Convenor of that group was also represented by her Press & Research officer.

The launch was hosted by Chief Superintendent John Thomson, Ayrshire Divisional Commander, Strathclyde Police and speakers were: Professor Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive of Families Outside¹ and Kathleen Bryson, Project Manager at The Lighthouse Foundation².

A range of representatives from the following agencies attended:

East Ayrshire Council
Families Outside
HMP Dumfries
HMP Kilmarnock
Lighthouse Foundation
North Ayrshire Council
SACRO
Scottish Parliament
Scottish Prison Service

¹ www.familiesoutside.org.uk

² www.lighthouse-foundation.co.uk

South West Scotland CJA Family Strategy Group
Strathclyde Police
The Wise Group
Victim Support Scotland

Chief Superintendent John Thomson, Ayrshire Divisional Commander of Strathclyde Police welcomed everyone to the launch and introduced Professor Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive of Families Outside and Kathleen Bryson, Project Manager of The Lighthouse Foundation.

Divisional Commander Thomson advised that more individuals are arrested within in Ayrshire than in Glasgow and that many are arrested from a family situation, sometimes leaving families unsure of what happens next. He praised the SWSCJA Family Strategy Group's initiative which would see arresting officers providing this information to families at the time of arrest.

Kathleen Bryson described the Lighthouse Foundation's projects. Kathleen advised that the Foundation has been involved in work with HMP Kilmarnock since 2004 and now has a Family Support Worker within Kilmarnock and Ayr Sheriff Courts. She was very supportive of the contact card initiative. Kathleen introduced Lorraine O'Neil who represents LHF on the South West Scotland CJA Family Strategy Group and who was part of the working group on the contact card, and Divisional Commander Thomson invited Lorraine to comment.

Lorraine O'Neil advised that she works from HMP Kilmarnock two days per week in the Links Centre and provides a link between the prisoner and his family. There is also family advice support available to families at prison visits.

Dr Nancy Loucks, Families Outside described the organisation's support service to Families, mainly of prisoners, on a national basis. This support can address issues such as accommodation, the consequences of stigmatisation / bullying when a family member is in custody. She noted that by the time an individual has been placed in custody, the family has usually already been through a lengthy court procedure with the family member, without any form of support. She emphasised this area's advantage in having a locally based organisation to provide support to offenders' families.

Dr Loucks advised that the majority of research conducted on the impact of custody on families has been carried out outwith the UK. Recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2011 Day of Discussion on the Children of Incarcerated Parents³ calls for the rights of children with a parent in prison to be taken into account from the moment of the arrest of their parent(s); the contact card developed by South West Scotland CJA's Family Strategy Group goes some way towards fulfilling this recommendation.

Divisional Commander Thomson advised that through the information on the contact card, and as a consequence of a change in the management of police custody, a family member would now be able to speak to an officer who will be more familiar with individual arrests rather than through a national contact centre or a desk officer who has not had direct involvement in an arrest. He reiterated his thanks to all agencies involved in developing the contact card and to those support agencies whose information is on the card.

Justina Murray, Chief Officer of South West Scotland also recorded thanks to all those involved in the initiative, particularly Inspector Clarke Callaghan who had initiated the idea of the contact card, and Susan Cross, Regional Co-ordinator of Families Outside and Lorraine O'Neil, the Lighthouse Foundation who, together with Clarke, had formed the working group to develop the card. She thanked all present for their attendance at the launch and confirmed with Mary Fee MSP that the contact card initiative would be raised at the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Families Affected by Imprisonment scheduled for later this month.

³ <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion/2011CRCDDReport.pdf>



South West Scotland
Community Justice Authority

STRATHCLYDE
POLICE


AYRSHIRE DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Working Together
Building safe communities

If you have experienced the arrest of a family member, these contacts may be able to support you and give you information or put you in touch with someone who can help.

For Practical Information :-
Strathclyde Police Ayrshire Division

Custody Sergeant - Kilmarnock	01563 - 505098
Custody Sergeant - Ayr	01292 - 664021
Custody Sergeant - Saltcoats	01294 - 404521

 Keeping people safe www.strathclyde.police.uk

When someone is arrested or goes to prison it can be a very stressful time for everyone involved. Families can feel isolated and that they are being punished too. You may see changes in your child's behaviour and it may be difficult deciding what to tell the children.

You might find it helpful to talk with someone.

For Helpline Support :-

Lighthouse Foundation One to one support & information for Ayrshire families of prisoners. Tel. 01563 521343 www.lighthouse-foundation.co.uk	Families Outside Support & Information Line for Prisoners' Families. (9am-5pm, Mon-Fri) Freephone 0500 839383 www.familiesoutside.org.uk
Parentline Scotland Freephone 0800 028 2233	Childline Freephone 0800 1111
Scottish Families Affected by Drugs (5pm-11pm, 7 days per week) Freephone 08080 10 10 11	Social Work Standby Service 24 hour cover 0800 328 7758
Samaritans Tel. 08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org.uk	Scottish Women's Aid 24 hour cover Freephone 0800 027 1234