



# *Scottish Prison Service* Family Strategy 2017-2022



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# Foreword

In 2013, The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) published its Organisational Review, *Unlocking Potential, Transforming Lives*, setting out a programme of transformational change that will place reducing reoffending at the heart of everything we do. The SPS, working in collaboration with partners, will contribute to the Scottish Government's Safer Communities Programme that proposes a clear vision for better outcomes for the people and communities of Scotland. Working in partnership, SPS is committed to seeing a flourishing, optimistic Scotland in which resilient communities, families and individuals live a life safe and free from crime.



In partnership with Barnardo's Scotland and Families Outside, we have designed a strategy for working with the individuals in our care as well as supporting their families and wider social networks. Considerable research has been carried out in recent years looking at the impact prison has, not only on people who find themselves sentenced to a period of imprisonment, but also those family members they leave behind in the community.

Everyone working within SPS is aware of the fact that imprisonment damages families and family relationships and that individuals who offend are less likely to do so upon release from prison when they return to a supportive environment in their communities.

In recognising the need to support those individuals in our care and their families, SPS looks forward to working collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to deliver this Family Strategy, based upon the following guiding principles:

- Family members are treated with fairness, dignity and respect;
- Families are included in their relatives' rehabilitation wherever possible;
- Every family is unique;
- The best interests of children are central to all decision making; and
- Effective partnership working is key to achieving successful outcomes.

Colin McConnell  
**Chief Executive**  
**Scottish Prison Service**



# Introduction

## The Scottish Government's national outcome:

***“We improve the life chances for Children, Young People and Families at risk”***

The purpose of the SPS Family Strategy is to improve outcomes for people in our care and their families. Positive relationships and family connection can have measurable benefits for people in and leaving our care and their families, and research specifically indicates that positive relationships can reduce the likelihood of re-offending, thus contributing to a safer society.

In the context of the Family Strategy, SPS recognises that individuals have many ways of defining what constitutes family and what being a part of a family means to them. Everyone's circumstances are unique so we must consider each individual and what makes up their family or social network. We will therefore use a broad definition of family to help identify a wide range of people including extended family members, informal networks and community representatives who can create a web of support that promotes desistance from offending behaviour. People who have a sense of purpose and belonging in the community, who are both enabled and able to repair damaged links with their family, friends and neighbours are more likely to become responsible citizens.

We will ensure that we use an individualised and person centred approach when assessing the needs of people in our care and their families. We must also recognise that some family relationships can be harmful and we must be sensitive to the needs of family members in these circumstances. Where there is an identified risk in maintaining family connections, for example where there is evidence that the family is involved in serious organised crime

or have a long history of pro-criminal attitudes and behaviours, we must support those in our care who choose to desist from offending behaviour in making the required life choices which enable them to make the positive changes in transforming their lives.

The Family Strategy sets out how SPS will review, develop and deliver national and local policies and procedures relating to the care of children, young people and families who have a family member in prison.

This strategy is connected to the SPS Vision for Young People in Custody, which sets out how we are transforming the care of those young people who are detained in custody in Scotland, encourage and support them to prepare for a positive future. We recognise that the family dynamics vary for our young people. We need to ensure that we identify who makes up their family unit and, where possible, we work in a more holistic way to engage families in providing support to meet their needs.



# Background and Context

*“Prison custody, whilst necessary to protect the public from those committing the most serious offences, can also have a harmful effect, both on those imprisoned and their families. An estimated 20,000 children in Scotland have parents in custody”.*

Scottish Government Analytical Services 2016

The SPS has been making steady progress in how it works with families and a number of positive initiatives are being delivered across our establishments. We recognise that in order to continue to reduce reoffending and work towards safer communities that we need to assess what is currently being delivered, to develop consistency in services and have the best mix and reach of services available across the estate. Finally, we need to maximise engagement opportunities with those in our care along with their families.

SPS is committed to continuously improving how we work with and respond to the needs of children, families and wider support networks. This refresh of the Family Strategy will help us take forward that improvement, and ensure that it is firmly aligned to Scottish Government priorities.

## **Why is it important for prisons to support and encourage contact between people in our care and their families?**

There are strong arguments to support giving priority to, and providing resources for, sustaining positive contact between people in our care and their families. The evidence is set out in detail elsewhere (Loucks, 2005) and the SPS Organisational Review (2013). The research tells us a number of key messages:

- Families can suffer greatly as a result of their family member's imprisonment, both through the pain of separation and because of the profound changes (such as reduced income, loss of housing, difficulties in travelling to prison for visits, shame and exclusion from former social networks) that may take place in the family's circumstances as a result of the prison sentence. There is a high likelihood that the partners of those in our care will experience increased ill health;
- Children may be upset and traumatised by separation from a parent. It may be difficult to sustain bonds between children and their imprisoned parent and this may inhibit attachment, affect the child's development and mental health and possibly make it more likely that the child will offend;
- Difficulties in maintaining family contact are associated with suicide and self-harm;
- Positive family contact can help to ease some of the pain and problems which family members experience and also influence relationships and behaviours within

the prison, making these more positive and settled;

- The existence of strong family bonds is associated with desistance from offending; and
- The impact that parenting has on future parenting experiences.

Family contact cannot be underestimated in providing opportunities to sustain and improve relationships. It is recognised that not all family relationships are positive, and some are damaging and abusive. But where there are positive relationships (or the potential to build them) prisons need to take steps that will help enable families to sustain and improve their relationships. The importance of family contact cannot be over emphasised, but at the same time we must be alert to those cases where family contact could have a negative impact.

SPS will align to Scottish Government expectations and priorities in relation to families.

The Family Strategy has been developed, taking account of the following legislation with which we must comply. Our policies and practice will be regularly reviewed and updated to comply with any changes necessary. SPS will also comply with standards set by HMIP Scotland and respond to any recommendations made.

SPS will comply with legislation and convention requirements including:

- Prisons Scotland Act 1989;
- The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rule 2011;
- National Child Protection Guidance 2014;
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014;
- Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Data Protection Act;
- Equality Act 2010; and
- Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

Implications at national and local levels for SPS, partner organisations, people in our care and their families.

# Guiding Principles

*The following principles will underpin the Family Strategy and inform all practice relating to families affected by imprisonment:*

**Family members are treated with fairness, dignity and respect**

Families should never feel stigmatised, with the assumption being that family members have done no wrong. We must be mindful of this principle in all our dealings with people in our care and their families.

We will work in a more holistic way with those in our care and their families wherever possible to improve outcomes.

**Families are included in their relatives' rehabilitation wherever possible**

**Every family is unique**

Different families will experience and respond in different ways to a family member's imprisonment. All decisions and actions relating to the family should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

In line with Scottish Government policy, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is at the heart of strategy, policy and practice affecting people in our care, children, young people and their families in order to promote wellbeing and positive life outcomes.

**The best interests of children are paramount to any decision making**

**Effective Partnership working is key to successful outcomes**

All partners should work collaboratively towards improving outcomes for people in our care and their families. We need to work with our partners to build on existing and future evidence of what works.



# Key Themes

*The guiding principles will underpin the following key themes which seek to achieve the desired outcomes for people in our care and their families. Each theme sets out SPS priorities together with associated actions that each establishment must implement in order to achieve the desired outcomes.*

**Family contact**

We will actively support and encourage family contact where possible

We will actively encourage, facilitate and support family engagement throughout a relative's time in custody

**Families feel included and engaged**

**Families are safe and well**

We will support wellbeing and positive life outcomes for people in our care and their families affected by imprisonment

We will actively promote the wellbeing and positive life outcomes for children affected by parental imprisonment

**Children**

# Family Contact

## **Priority Action: We will actively support and encourage family contact.**

SPS recognises that families and social networks can be motivating factors that can influence behavioural change. We are committed to working with people in our care, their families, social networks, wider communities and partners in order to maintain or develop meaningful family contact throughout a period of imprisonment. We maintain safety and security for all. However, as far as practicable, we will also create a welcoming, relaxed and comfortable environment to include a child-friendly space which encourages positive relations between people in and leaving our care and their child or children. All establishments will seek to maximise suitable visiting opportunities for families and children through regular and constructive contact.

### **SPS will:**

- Facilitate children's visits that take account of school hours and public transport in order to avoid disruption to schooling where possible;
- Encourage and promote meaningful relationships by enhancing family contact where possible;
- Where it is not possible for families to use the standard arrangements for visits, establishments are proactive in taking alternative steps to assist people in our care to sustain family relationships;
- Encourage and promote meaningful contact through various methods including - visits, letters, telephone calls and, where possible, the "email a prisoner scheme";
- Work with establishments and partners to develop their capacity to provide facilities conducive to supporting children and families affected by imprisonment and create a welcoming environment and reception;
- Provide a visiting environment that meets the needs of children and families and create clean, comfortable and child-friendly spaces that encourage personal contact, and are conducive to play and positive relations between parents and their children;
- Provide a welcoming waiting area and visits area which offer a range of facilities including refreshments;
- Provide opportunities for family induction sessions to take place that promote and encourage family attendance;
- Promote activities which encourage family interaction and learning such as healthy eating and arts and crafts;
- Provide a programme of family days and special events;
- Display contact details of relevant staff and information about their roles for people in our care and their families; and
- Communicate local visit processes and procedures clearly to people in our care and their families in a range of languages.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Families and wider social networks have the ability to maintain positive relationships with people in our custody; and**
- **Have a positive experience when visiting establishments.**



# Families feel Included and Engaged

**Priority Action: We will actively encourage and support meaningful engagement by acknowledging the strengths and assets that families and wider social networks have to contribute in an individual's desistance journey.**

When a family member has been given a period of imprisonment, it can be a stressful and confusing time for both the individual and their families. Evidence suggests that people without family support during imprisonment are up to six times more likely to re-offend in the first year after release than those with an active family interest. Therefore the central focus is on how we encourage families to engage in a meaningful way, knowing they are likely to have an in depth knowledge and understanding of the individual and are well placed in making a positive contribution to reducing reoffending.

## **SPS will:**

- Be respectful, consistent and open in our dealings with families and provide a welcoming environment;
- Identify opportunities for families to access and participate in activities which promote wellbeing;
- In partnership with others, we will involve people in our care and their families to ensure their views and any potential impact are considered in the decision making process;
- Work effectively with partners to improve transitions from community to custody;
- Work effectively with partners to improve transitions and outcomes following release;
- Provide guidance on how families gain access to information about the wellbeing of their family member in custody;
- Implement local procedures for responding to family events in a consistent manner, such as compassionate visits, etc;
- Ensure that families know how to raise complaints so that we can gather and analyse feedback to improve local practices;
- Clearly communicate policy, procedures and expectations to enable families to engage positively; and
- Provide families and those in our care with information in a range of formats including information booklets, websites in a range of languages and access to translation services to allow them to support family members during their time in custody.

## **Where applicable and appropriate, based on individual family circumstances, SPS will:**

- Provide opportunities to work more holistically with families involving them in their family member's time in custody e.g. encouraging/supporting attendance at Case Conferences and other identified supports or interventions, including the opportunity to discuss afterwards;
- Include families in the planning and preparation for an individual's return to the community;
- Share information with families in line with Scottish Government Code of Practice, including any change of circumstances; and
- Include families in decisions that may involve or affect them e.g. progression, Home Detention Curfew (HDC), release dates, accommodation, licence conditions, and support for substance misuse

## **Outcomes:**

- Families feel included and engaged in decisions that may involve or affect them;
- Staff have a greater understanding of the impact of imprisonment on people in our care and their families; and
- Families feel they are treated with respect and do not feel stigmatised in any dealings with our staff.

# Families are Safe and Well

**Priority Action:** *We will support the wellbeing of people in our care and their families.*

The SPS will work with families and social networks to enhance wellbeing, in particular those families who are affected by imprisonment. People who suffer family breakdown as a result of imprisonment often experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, guilt, anger and despair, and are therefore at increased risk of suicide and self-harm (Loucks 2012a; Codd 2008). GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting wellbeing for children, young people and their families.

To ensure a common understanding of wellbeing, it is described using eight indicators which are commonly referred to as SHANARRI – SAFE, HEALTHY, ACHIEVING, NURTURED, ACTIVE, RESPECTED, RESPONSIBLE and INCLUDED. Understanding that wellbeing means different things to different individuals and family units at different times of their lives, it is important to adopt a person and family-centred approach when assessing wellbeing. Our staff acknowledge the diverse needs of individuals and consider the SHANARRI indicators in all interactions with those in our care, their families and wider social networks. GIRFEC promotes joined up working and information sharing for practitioners; it means working across organisational boundaries and putting children and their families at the heart of decision making.

## **SPS will:**

- Ensure people in our care and their families are supported appropriately in relation to wellbeing concerns;
- Support and empower people in our care and their families to access relevant justice and universal services that could help them to sustain improved wellbeing and crime free lives on release;
- Support staff to enable them to be able to identify and respond to wellbeing needs of people in our care and their family members;
- Work with partners to support families to access services that improve safety and wellbeing;
- Work with partners to provide services and interventions which support families such as parenting, mediation etc;
- Ensure case management processes take account of family wellbeing;
- Through our processes and procedures, sensitively and effectively seek, record and act upon information as required in order to support family wellbeing and safety and to ensure legislative compliance; and
- Have clear protocols in place for how people in our care and their families can be kept informed about the well-being of their family members.

## **Outcomes:**

- Staff have a good understanding of safety and wellbeing and are confident in responding to concerns appropriately and proportionately; and
- People in our care and their families have access to a range of services and supports designed to improve their safety and wellbeing.

# Children



## **Priority Action: We will actively promote the wellbeing and positive life outcomes for children affected by parental imprisonment**

Making sure Scotland is the best place in the world to grow up by putting children and their families at the heart of policy making and service delivery is a priority for the Scottish Government. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 is about improving wellbeing for children and young people in Scotland. The Act includes the provision of the Named Person service and new Corporate Parenting duties for Care Leavers. In addition, Section 107 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act requires the SPS to ask those in our care if they have parental responsibilities in relation to a child.

SPS must ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect children and young people from harm and abuse who visit or make contact with anyone in our care. Child protection is the responsibility of all who interact with children and families, regardless of whether that work brings them into direct contact with children and young people.

### **SPS will:**

- Ensure that we deliver our responsibilities as a Corporate Parent which include being alert to, assessment of needs, promote the interests, provide opportunities, access to opportunities, continually improve services which will improve outcomes and life chances for Care Leavers;
- Identify and respond appropriately to child protection and wellbeing issues in line with National Child Protection Policy, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and Criminal Justice Scotland Act;
- Ensure relevant staff are trained in child protection and wellbeing issues in line with National Child Guidance and Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014;
- Ensure a range of age appropriate information is available for children and young people;
- Support people in our care to participate in their child's education;
- Raise awareness in partnership of the impact of imprisonment on children; and
- Work with our partners to intervene early for those children who are identified as at risk of offending through our input to local Children's Services Plans.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Effective partnership working to improve services for people in our care and their families; and**
- **Children are at the centre of our policy and practice.**



# Actions

## National Actions

- SPS will ensure that the Family Strategy is embedded within the Corporate Planning process;
- Develop a framework for family services and interventions;
- Any material change in the delivery of services will be impact-assessed in relation to children and families;
- GICs and relevant policy leads will work with Community Planning Partnerships to improve the outcomes for families;
- SPS will review all new and related strategies and policies over time to provide opportunities to maximise family contact and engagement in line with national policy and support establishments through to implementation;
- All SPS Policy Leads will take account of the principles within the Family Strategy to inform future policy development;
- Family Policy Lead will work with others to monitor, evaluate and share best practice;
- The SPS organisational structure should be managed through the operational line designated by the Governor in Charge, this will help ensure consistency with clear roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of the Family Strategy;
- The Family Policy Lead will work with Establishment Leads to support the implementation of the Family Strategy, including arranging training, sharing of best practice and monitoring and evaluating practice;
- Operational responsibilities will be managed under the establishment lead through a local Family Strategy Group;
- Family Contact Officer's engage primarily with families (family facing), helping them to remain connected and build their agency;
- Our staff play a primary role in engaging with people in our care (prisoner facing), helping them to recognise and build upon their assets including family relationships;
- Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs) play an increasing role in supporting the reintegration of people in our care with their families and communities;
- SPS will deliver on recommendations made in relation to Our Lives Report (G Robinson, 2014);
- Family Policy Lead will work with Scottish Prison Service College to develop a training needs analysis in relation to the Family Strategy which aligns to the Professionalisation Agenda including:
  - ◇ Relevant SPS staff trained in child protection and wellbeing issues in line with National Child Protection Policy and CYP Act; and
  - ◇ Those staff who work directly with families and the family members of people in custody to enable them to perform their roles.

## Local Actions

- Establishments will ensure compliance with all legislation and policy and develop and review local processes to support the Family Strategy;
- Local Family Strategy Groups to be established with clear improvement plans to promote and deliver outcomes set out in the Family Strategy to meet regularly;
- Establish and formalise local networks to support delivery of the Family Strategy; and
- Any material change in the delivery of services is impact-assessed in relation to children and families.

# Actions

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## Learning and Development

In line with the Professionalisation Agenda, SPS will develop and roll out a comprehensive training package for all staff, directly or indirectly, involved in the support of people in our care and their families. This will cover child and family policies, procedures, legislative compliance and good practice as is appropriate to specific roles.

Additional training and support for staff who work directly with people in and leaving our care and their families will be provided with continuing professional development opportunities thereafter.

Themes may include:

- The nature and purpose of their role and how it complements others' roles;
- Knowledge of available family support services;
- Case study database to build understanding of how to support families facing different problems and when and how to refer;
- Training on relevant legislation, including child and adult protection training, data protection and information sharing;
- GIRFEC and its implications in the context of families affected by imprisonment;
- Awareness of the wider requirements under the Equality Act 2010;
- Bereavement, trauma and loss training; and
- Training in customer service skills, especially for front-line staff, including how to make people feel safe and comfortable on first arrival at the prison.

## Information Sharing

Protocols and organisational culture should support the appropriate and timely sharing of information between internal and external partners and with people in our care and their families.

- SPS will respect rights to privacy and seek permission to share personal information with other agencies, except where security, crime or child protection considerations take precedence;
- SPS will have clear protocols for sharing information about people in our care and their families; and
- Protocols should be clear in relation to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

## Performance

As part of the new Corporate Planning and Performance arrangements, SPS have developed Success Indicators and Essential Actions mapped to the organisations Strategic Themes and Outcomes which are:

- People: We will have the right people in the right place at the right time;
- Partnerships: Our collaboration with partners supports desistance and the reduction of reoffending;
- Person Centred: Those in our custody are empowered to build on their assets;
- Performance: Our services are effective, provide good value for money; and deliver on our Equality Outcomes; and
- SPS will use a range of methods to gather evidence to continually improve our services which includes those in our care and their families.





## Equality Statement

The SPS is an equal opportunities employer where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. We are fully committed to equality, diversity and human rights and to ensuring our culture, working environment, policies, processes and practices are free from bias. This policy applies to all employees regardless of protected characteristics, and, subject to any eligibility criteria, length of service, grade, working pattern or operational status.

## Vision for Equality

Everyone in SPS values diversity in all aspects of our work; Everyone in SPS is responsible for respecting and promoting equality and human rights; We have sustainable and effective policies and procedures that place equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for human rights at the centre of everything we do.



voicing the needs  
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