



families
outside

supporting
families affected
by imprisonment

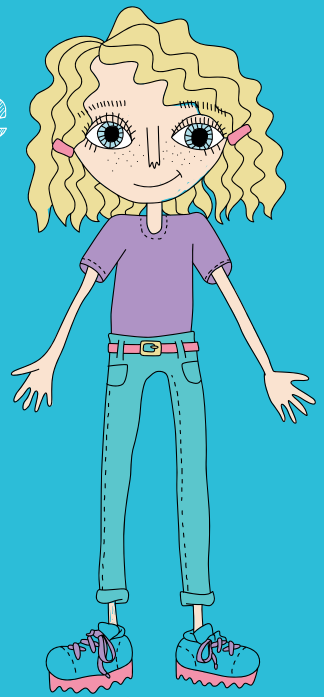
My Story



What does having someone you love in prison mean for children like you and me? You are not alone; this is My Story. I hope it helps.

My Story, written by Katie, has been developed with support from Families Outside, the only national charity that works solely to support families affected by imprisonment, to help young people with a family member in prison to understand and explore their feelings.

Chapter 1 : About Me



My name is Katie.
I'm 9 years and 9 months
old, I have blonde hair,
blue eyes, and I am small.



B.i.n.g.o!

I have a great family. My mum is crazy like a cat and always making amazing fajitas, because she is always laughing and having a joke. Then there's Granny BINGO. She's called Granny Bingo because she is always at the bingo. I've stayed at hers for ages since I was 3 month old, a tiny baby, My gran is soooooooo special.

But my dad is in prison.

I can't go see him, but I write him letters. My dad is still my dad. I don't really know what's happened and why or what he's done. This makes me sad, angry, and confused about my life. But I still love my dad. I am writing this to tell people how I feel. It's important for other kids like me – this might be able to help them, to know how it feels and how to cope and they're not alone. For some children like me, this book might give them some advice.

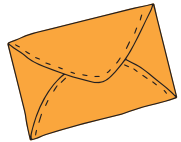


Chapter 1 : About Me

My dad is 34, I think. I wish he could come off the drugs. I wish that because I miss him and want a relationship with him.

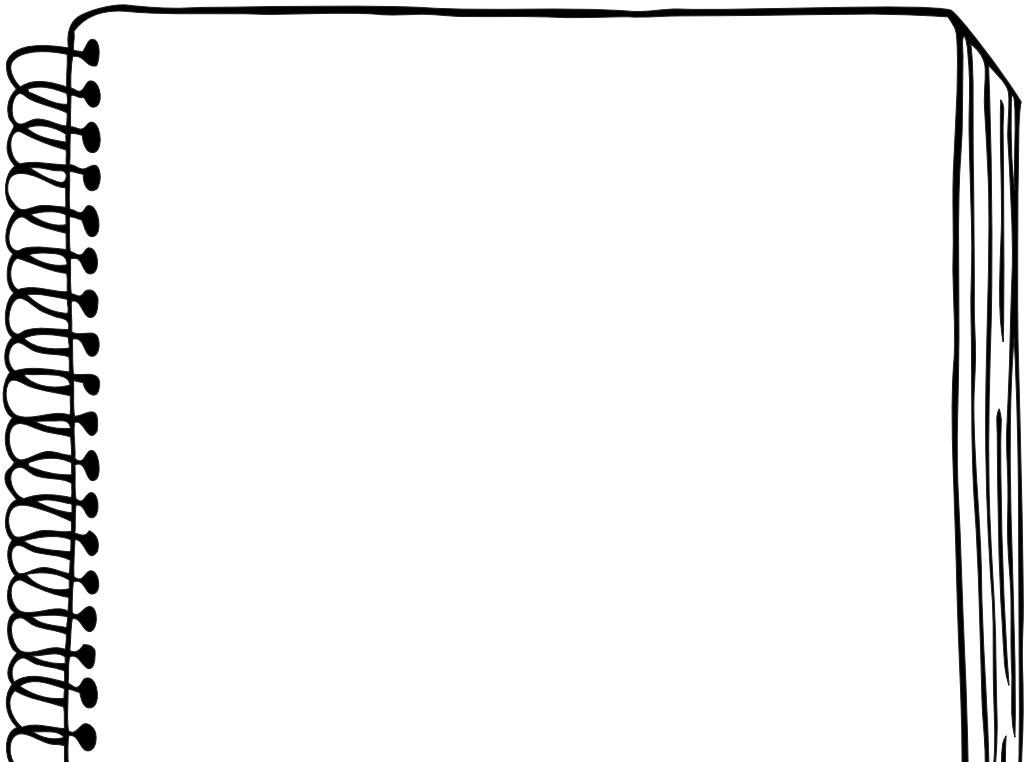
We write letters to each other. Every time I get a letter, I'm filled with joy. I check the post every day.

I like writing letters to him because I get all my emotions out. I tell him how I feel. I feel sad, angry, frustrated, and worried. How do you feel?



*** Exercise 1 ***

Write a letter to your family member. Describe or draw how you feel and what you've been doing. Your letter doesn't have to be sent, but it can be helpful to write your thoughts down.



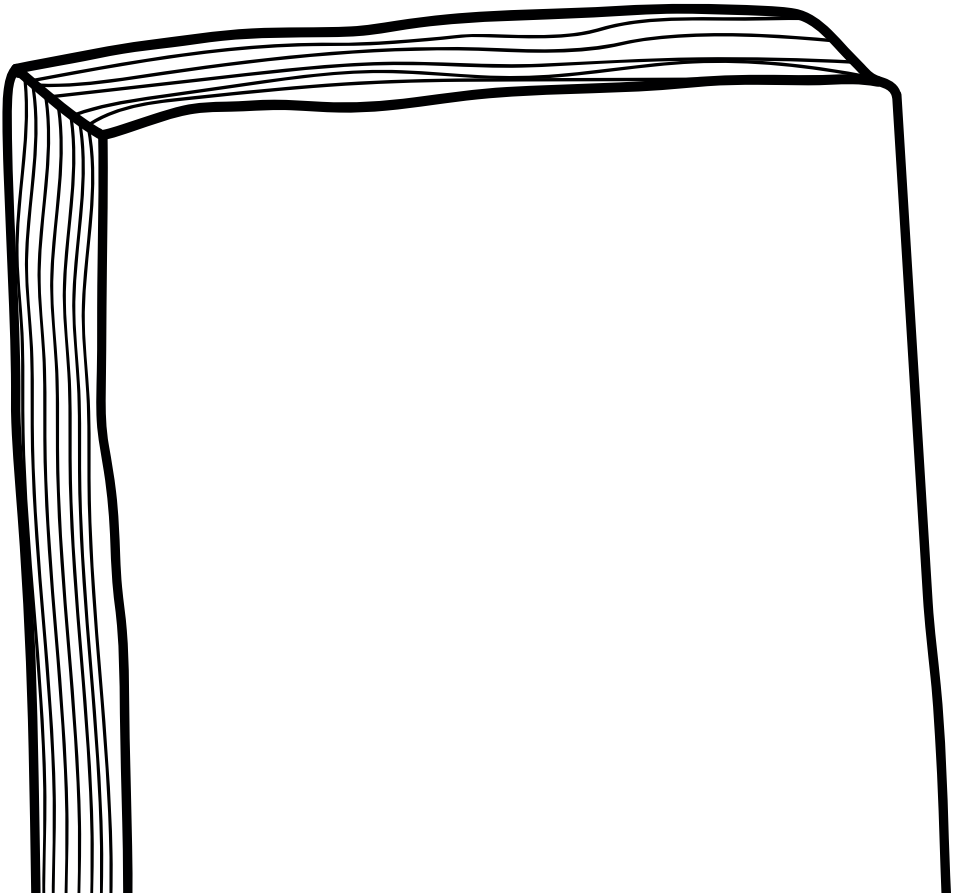
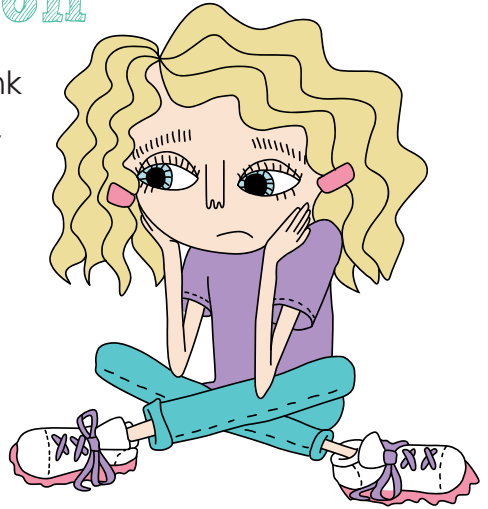
Chapter 2 : Prison

When you or I say that word I think of a lonely cell, which has a bed, a desk, paper and a pen, and a chair. Just a boring old cell.

It gives me the shivers up my back. Sometimes I worry.

*** Exercise 2 ***

Describe or draw what you think prison is like:



Chapter 2 : Prison

*** Exercise 3 ***

Describe or draw how your feelings look when you think of your family member in prison:



HOPE



YES

Chapter 2 : Prison

What questions do you have about prison?
I had many. Here are some I wanted to know...

"What do they
get to eat?"

"Will they be
in handcuffs
when I visit?"

"How long
is a visit?"

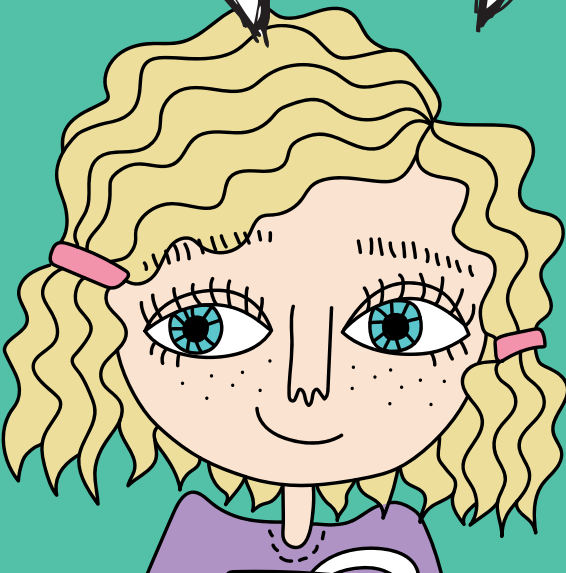
"Is prison like
what you see
on TV?"

"Do they play
games?"

"Will they have
their mobile
phones?"

"How big
is the
prison?"

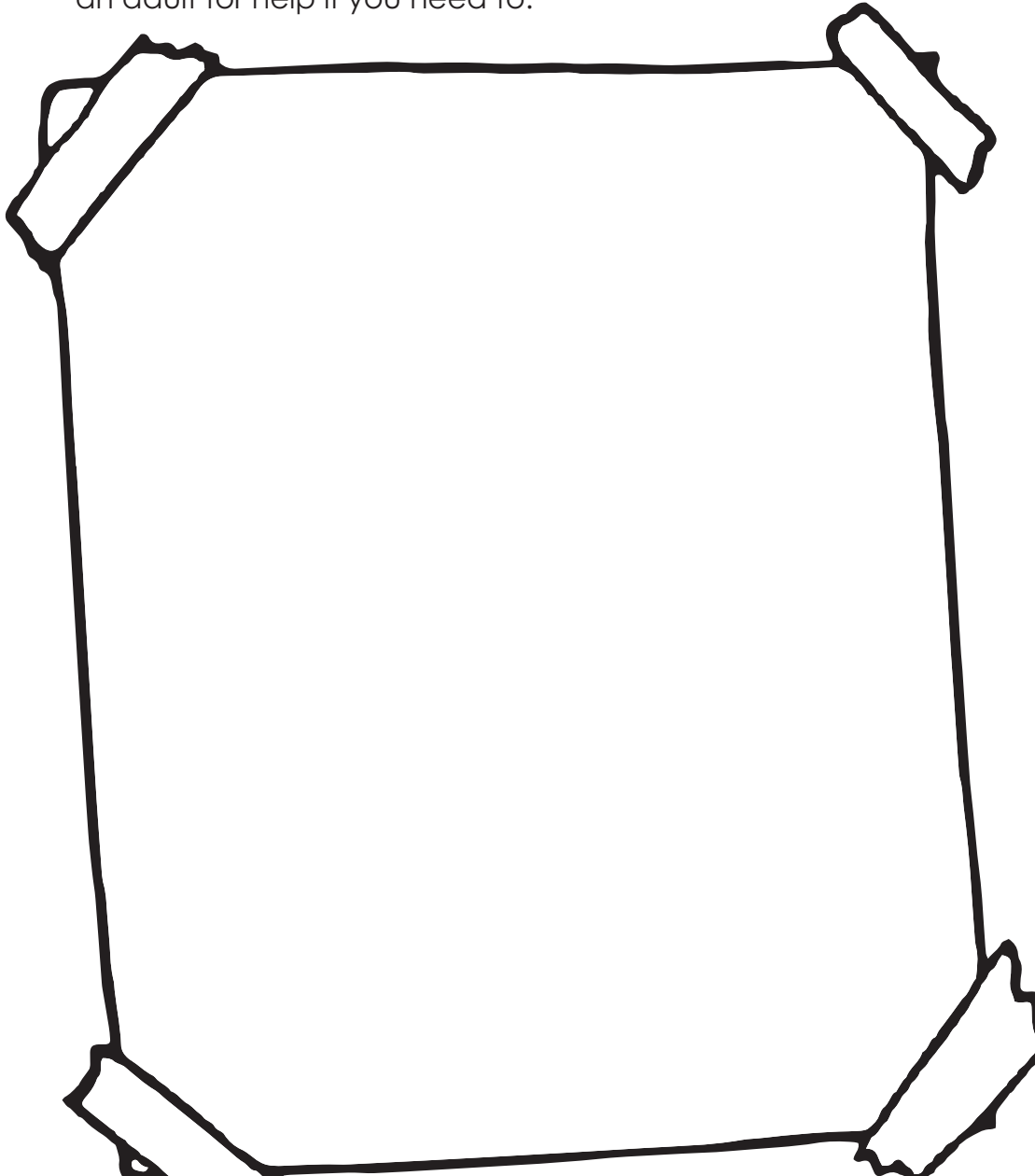
I thought my questions were
silly, but really they aren't –
what is it really like?



Chapter 2 : Prison

*** Exercise 4 ***

Draw or write the questions that you have. You can ask an adult for help if you need to.



Chapter 3 : School

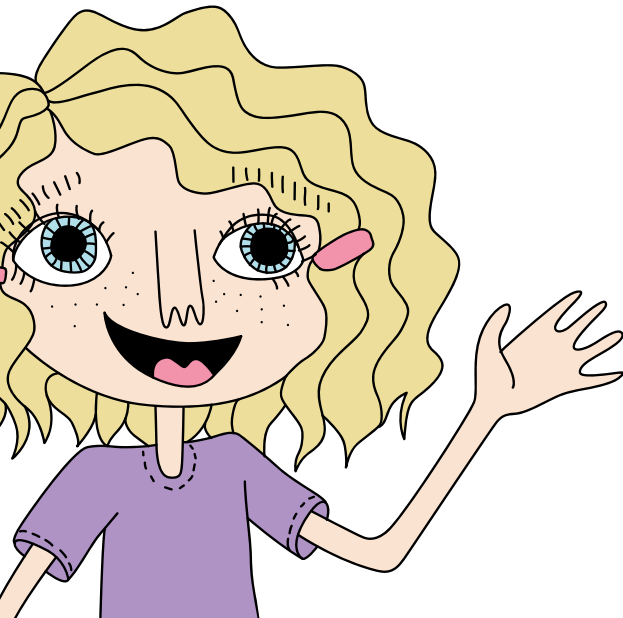
The subjects I really like are English, maths and sometimes PE or ICT. I don't like playtime or lunchtime. I don't have very many friends, so it's too long at lunchtime and I feel lonely.

At first I wasn't very sure if I wanted anyone to know about my dad. It's a feeling in my stomach that if more people find out about it that they whisper about me behind my back. It's like a big house on your back but nobody can see it – only you. So it brings you down, like you're a totally different kid.



But eventually I decided to tell my teacher.

Having someone at school who I trust and can talk to has really helped me.



Here's some advice: if you have a mum, dad, or any other family member in prison, let the school know. I think schools should know about these things and stop bullies. That would make schools a better environment to learn and play in.

Chapter 3 : School

*** Exercise 5 ***

Do you like school? What're your favourite subjects? How do you feel about other people knowing you have a family member in prison? If you were to tell anyone, who would it be and why?



Chapter 4 : How to cope

Coping is hard to do sometimes for some people, but your problems are the same as hundreds and thousands of people around the world, including you and me. My coping and yours is different, but it doesn't make us different.

It's important to stay calm and talk to an adult if you need to. Try and speak to a grown up when it's happening, not after it's happened. Don't cope with it all on your own, because you're not alone, and it's hard and lonely doing it on your own

If you ask for help, it will help you a lot. Remember it's ok to get frustrated and sad, but just remember it's not your fault; don't blame yourself.

When your face feels like this, talk to someone.



How do I feel today?
Tick the box

Sad

☐

Ok

☐

Happy

☐


ask for help!

Chapter 4 : How to cope

What activities do you do to relax? How does it help?

It's good to know how to cope and what to do when you can't. Sometimes I feel like there's a big noisy TV on, with a powerful picture and you can't turn it off and it's really blaring in your ears. When you can cope, it's quieter and peaceful, relaxing.

Do something that relaxes you. I read my book or I lie down, put a book on my belly and breathe in and out. If you can see the book, you're doing great; if not, don't worry, just keep going.



Here's what I like to do to cope:

- Drawing
- Reading
- Writing
- Watch TV
- Play on my phone
- PS4
- Doodling

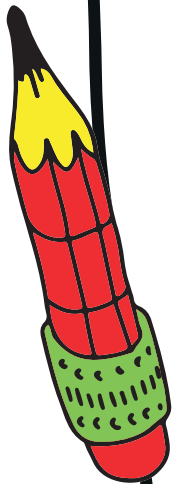
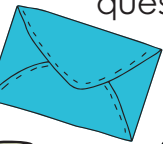


Chapter 4 : How to cope

*** Exercise 6 ***

Sometimes it's helpful to write down anything you would like to say to your family member when you can't see them.....
Think about what you would tell your loved one.

If I had a conversation with my dad, even for 5 minutes, I would tell my dad what you have put me through and how I feel guilty. Why did you go on drugs? I have so many questions.



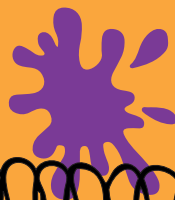
Talk

Chapter 4 : How to cope

*** Exercise 7 ***

What questions would you ask?

WHY



Chapter 5 : Emotions

It's hard to hate someone and love them at the same time. I feel like that sometimes, and it's okay. You can get a load of emotions every day, and they are different. Can you pick which ones you feel?



sad



angry



worried



happy



relief



shock



frustrated

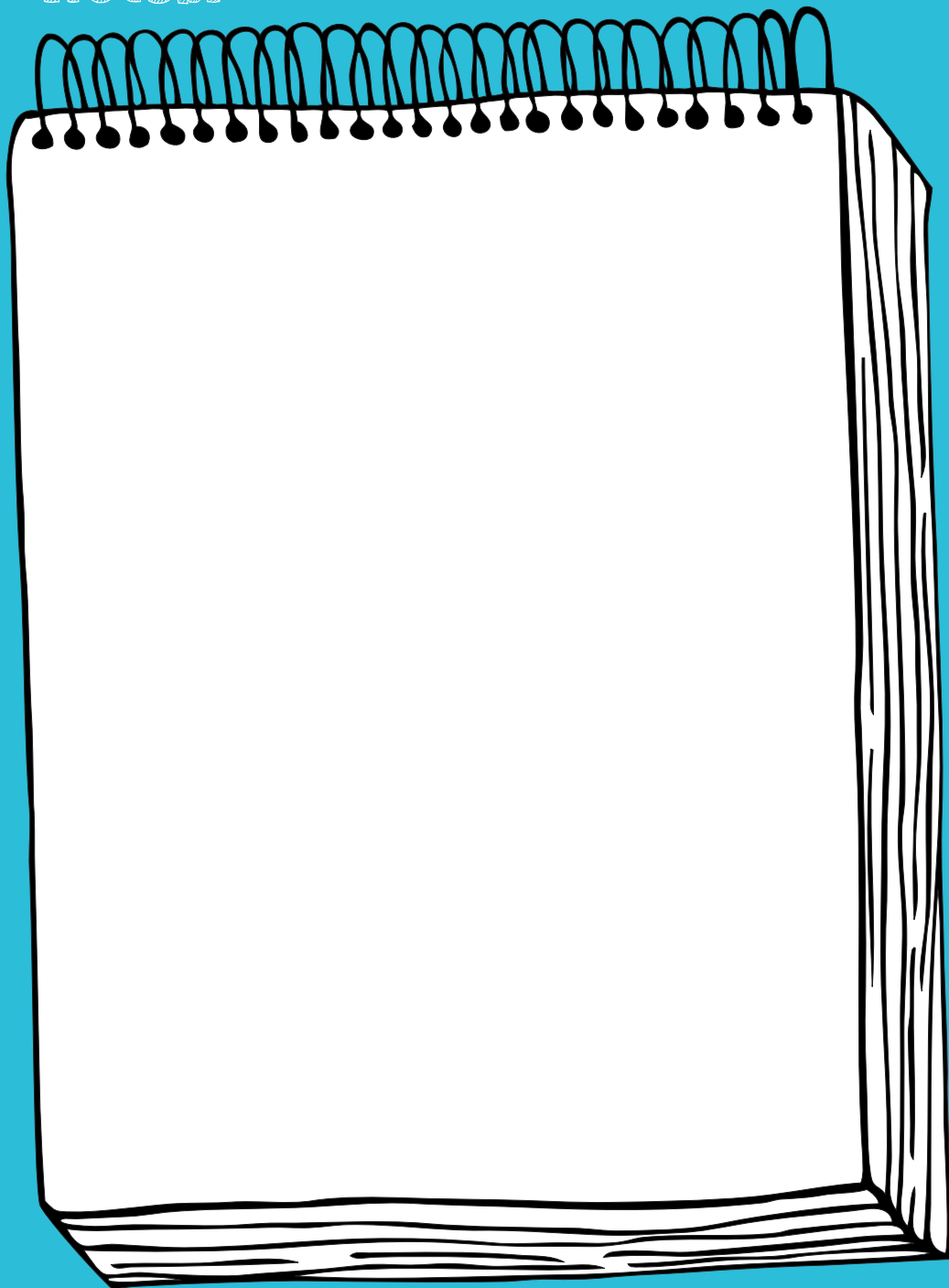
Happy feelings are being overjoyed and being excited, but bad feelings can be feeling worried, sick, frustrated, and sad. When you have bad feelings, it's better to do something you love doing or write it down.

Do you still need help?

We are all different and will all feel different things. If, like Katie, you have a family member in prison, the most important thing to remember is that you are not alone. If you are still worried or still need someone to talk to, Families Outside can help.

Just give us a call on **0800 254 0088**, or use the other options for **contact** on the back cover.

Notes:



We support families through our helpline, training, visitors' centres, events, direct support, research, publications, policy, campaigns, and donations.



A special thanks for the kind donation from Mary Black in support of this publication.

For information and support:

Freephone 0800 254 0088

Text FAMOUT followed by your message to 60777

Email support@familiesoutside.org.uk

Visit www.familiesoutside.org.uk



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