

Inside Outside Family Matters 13 November 07

PANEL QUESTIONS

Panel - commentary and questions on the Family Matters Model

Chair, Sue Raikes, Chief Executive, TV Partnership
Annetta Bennett, Training and Development Manager, KIDS VIP
Vivien Brandon, NOMS National Policy Lead, Children and Families Pathway
Sarah Salmon, Assistant Director, Action for Prisoners Families
Patsy Townsend, Director of Youth Programmes, TV Partnership
Gerry Marshall, Chief Officer, Thames Valley Probation Area
Duncan Hume, Senior Probation, Thames Valley
Werner van Rensburg, Thames Valley Probation Area
Sara Lewis SCIE, Practice Development Manager

Question 1 – James Campbell – TVP

Is there a general need for a *measure* to convince others of the value of the work – and if so what is the best way of measuring this?

Viv Brandon: You need to negotiate with colleagues to find out what drives commissioning. I'm not sure that you can identify 1 or 2 targets that will drive this. You do however need clear standards and a level of accountability.

Sara Lewis: I agree with V.B. – from a child care perspective the question of how we are accountable and who is accountable is very important. Until we know 'whose Responsibility' we are unable to say whether the accountability has been fulfilled

Tess Kirby: We need to establish how the work can be progressed through the Service Level Agreement with the ROMS office.

Patsy Townsend: the ROMS office have commissioned 70 of our information packs which have been distributed across the region.

Question 2 – Time Edge – Chaplain HMP Bullingdon

What happened to the role of the volunteer – why did this stop and what lessons can be learned?

Gerry Marshall: yes, in previous years we did have volunteers working in a number of areas. But this was not without risk, and was not a simple matter. There is a need for an agency who can broker services well. Budgets limit the number of potential prison visits,

by probation office Resource constraints mean that we have to spend time where benefits are highest.

Sue Raikes: There is less emphasis on befriending now – we know there are links between offending behaviour and the connection with the family unit.

Question 3 - Duncan Hume – Senior Probation, Thames Valley

Is there a need for a National bringing together of agencies to support this vulnerable group?

Viv Brandon: yes, there is a commissioned review to be published shortly which will look at this, and will look at a national reference group to set standards, provide a framework of what is expected and establish what support offenders and their families expect. Some of the main priorities are:

Information/advice/guidance
Improved services for women offenders
Offender Management - what is needed

Sarah Salmon: In 1990 Action for Prisoners' Families worked with the criminal justice field and has been pushing for work with prisoners families to be mainstream. At the moment these families fall between 2 camps. The pending review aims to make this a top line national issue instead of the current patchy approach.

Sara Lewis: part of our work looking at children of prisoners involved questionnaires issued to 150 Local Safeguarding Children's Boards asking whether they felt they had a responsibility. We only received 32 replies (27%) and of these 20+ said no.

Annetta Bennett: This is a key question – who has responsibility – and we need the feedback from the current review.

Question 4 - Werner van Rensburg - Thames Valley Probation Area

Could you envisage a Panel of Accountability (i.e. like the MAPPA panel)?

Viv Brandon: yes it's a good idea to bring services together to work together - the Social Exclusion Taskforce is currently looking at bringing children and adult services together to focus on families at risk.

Patsy Townsend: That's what we're trying to do – but working at practitioner level. I'm not sure that this would work beyond a local level - you would struggle to make this work across a larger area – even across Oxfordshire this is hard

Question 5 - Sonia Davies - Inclusion Leader, Penn Wood Primary and Nursery School

How do schools get hold of information about whose parents are in prison etc so that they can be supportive?

Natalie Downing: This is what we are trying to achieve – to get a protocol for this so that the police for example know to inform schools. And the schools need to know how to deal with this.

Annetta Bennett: There is a need for training, like the kind that TVP are rolling out but in schools. We need information points in schools to signpost within the school and beyond addressing DV, prison etc.

Sarah Salmon: There is also a need for confidence in confidentiality – currently parents are not sure what schools would do with this type of information - how would schools handle it.

Question 6 - Karen Browne - Aylesbury YOI

Information needs to be fed back to the prisons too – need to assure parents how information will be dealt with – are posts in place within the prison to handle this?

Viv Brandon: There is little sharing of information – we recognise this as a problem and need to find a way to address it. That's why to some extent we need a 'measure' to use as an example to pitch for this – we need information/measure to be able to get standards set and to address problems.

Question 7 - David Faulkner – Trustee – TVP

We talk of accountability, structure, metrics – this is bureaucratic. Let's remember there are a lot of people who just want to do good work but how can they sustain their efforts and energy to do this in frustrating conditions. There is a lot of warmth and energy but within a framework of targets.

Viv Brandon: We are not purely focussed on metrics. But in order to get clarity from the centre we need to make a stronger case.

Gerry Marshall: There is a problem around creating and driving government policy without letting things gets stupid. We need to get programmes into the LAA to build and share commitment to the outcomes. Ministers want and need to be able to show what they have achieved.

Sara Lewis: Going back to my statement about the questionnaires SCIE issued – we need to be sensible and not be stupid about accountability/measures

Question 8 - Susan Merrifield – Huntercombe YOI

We see lots of satellite services, all receiving funding – but transport is a big problem for us – could we not see a consolidated approach and funding to look at this?

Patsy Townsend: part of the money we recently received from our sponsors Vodafone has been earmarked for the Family Matters programme and we intend to look more closely at Huntercombe to see how we can work together to support your work.

Question 9 - Susan Merrifield – Huntercombe YOI

What do we mean by the term ‘family’ – some of the young people I work with have a ‘gang’ as a family.

Annetta Bennett – yes we need to backtrack to look at the definition of ‘family’ – we need experts to reach some of these groups of people – the YOT has used Trident to work with these.

Sarah Salmon: ‘family’ is really family & friends. The set up is often intricate and complex and A.P.F. supports and considers the wider family and networks.