



OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE: AN EVALUATION OF THE FAMILY MAN PROGRAMME

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THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation was commissioned by Safe Ground. The aims of which were to:

- describe students' perceptions of family relationships, of themselves, their educational opportunities and the impact of their offending on their family
- describe supporters' perceptions of family relationships, the impact of the student's offending on themselves and other family members, the possible impact of the Family Man programme
- describe the views and perceptions of Family Man facilitators/educators¹ of the perceived benefits of the programme on individuals
- assess the cost-effectiveness of the programme
- assess the longer-term reoffending rates of a cohort of Family Man graduates from 2008-2010

The evaluation outcomes of interest were:

- changes in students' and supporters' perceptions of their family relationships and of themselves
- the cost-effectiveness of the programme
- the impact of the programme on measured reoffending rates

The research methodology

The study used mainly qualitative research methods and comprised six core elements:

1. A literature review
2. Two surveys - pre and post programme - conducted with programme participants
3. Two surveys - pre and post programme - conducted with programme supporters
4. Semi-structured interviews with Family Man facilitators
5. A cost-benefit analysis of the Family Man programme
6. A reoffending study of released Family Man graduates

The Family Man cohort

- Seventy-six men from three prisons and 58 supporters took part in the Family Man evaluation;
- Almost two-thirds of students had the programme recommended to them by another prisoner;
- Just over half the student sample signed up to the programme to 'improve themselves and/or their family relationships';
- Twenty-two students reported that since being incarcerated contact with their children was 'never', 'rare' or 'infrequent';
- Just under half the fathers (n=27) thought their absence was emotionally upsetting for their children;
- Eleven men thought their children's education and behaviour was being affected by their absence.

¹ The terms facilitator and educator are used interchangeably in this report. Facilitators are prison staff that manage and run the FM programme, educators are education staff that run and manage the FM programme.

The Family Man Programme: Views from students, supporters and facilitators

- Almost three-quarters (n=25) of the supporters thought their student should seek employment or further training as an essential goal post release;
- Twenty supporters stated that their student should focus on improving his relationship with his children and being a better father;
- Most men and supporters considered the 'What Next' day to be useful. Of the 63 men who commented on the day, 52 rated the day as 'useful' or 'very useful';
- Like the students, the supporters were positive about the opportunity the 'What Next' day gave them to speak to a range of services that could assist the student and his family post release;
- Graduation day received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, supporters and facilitators.

The Family Man Programme: Views and perceptions of 'what worked'

- The programme was overwhelmingly popular with nearly all the interviewees, 63 of the 66 students expressed satisfaction with the overall programme;
- Of the 63 men who responded, only two believed there had been no change in their relationship (with their supporter) following the programme;
- Students were particularly positive about the facilitators and reported that they enjoyed the variety of teaching methods that were employed;
- A number of supporters mentioned the positive impact of the programme on their student's confidence;
- Over half of the men commented that the programme had improved their awareness of family issues;
- Twenty-four students claimed they had noticed a general improvement in their family relationships;
- Overall the supporters believed the programme had been a positive experience for the students;
- Almost every supporter identified one way in which their student had changed for the better;
- A third of the post-supporter interviewees believed that the programme had highlighted to their student the importance of thinking before acting;
- Facilitators were overwhelmingly supportive of the programme, believing it to be a worthwhile programme that can change the way men think about their offending behaviour.

The measured impact of the Family Man Programme

- A Ministry of Justice Data Lab study suggested that Family Man programme has a positive impact on reducing reoffending by between 3 and 19 percentage points;
- The Family Man programme is cost efficient, generating £1.33 in reoffending savings for every £1 invested in the programme.

Recommendations and Conclusions

- Safe Ground should consider building in greater flexibility to the programme content to meet the needs of the diverse student population attracted to taking part in the programme. For life sentence/long-term prisoners this might involve setting goals around constructive use of the rest of their time in prison, rather than focusing on imminent release.

- Safe Ground should consider asking facilitators to assess the literacy levels of each cohort of students to determine whether some lessons should be adapted. It may be beneficial to vary the level of literacy exercises for some students on the programme.
- Safe Ground may want to consider examining the range of relationships within each cohort. Given that Family Man positions itself as a family relationships programme, rather than specifically a parenting programme, it may be beneficial to provide break-out sessions for students who have grown-up children or no children in order to, enable this group to focus less on parenting and more on the variety of family relationships that exist.
- The 'What Next' day should be tailored to meet the needs of each individual cohort of students. Safe Ground should assist the facilitators to achieve this.
- Cell-based refresher courses should be considered. The Family Man programme attracts men serving long sentences; however, it is difficult to measure its impact for those individuals who complete the programme in year four of a fifteen year sentence. Refresher programmes will not only consolidate the work done in the full-length programme prior to an imminent release but will be invaluable for any future Safe Ground reoffending studies as comparisons will be able to be made between graduates of the formal eight week programme and graduates of the programme who also received a refresher course
- Multi-method evaluations are likely to be the best approach to capturing and measuring the effectiveness of the Family Man programme.
- To enable Safe Ground to benefit from any future Justice Data Lab submissions, standardised data should be collected by facilitators.
- In the long-term the intention is that custody and community reoffending budgets are joined up to provide better continuity of service. Safe Ground might wish to consider designing, for Family Man prison graduates and those on community sentences, a community-based Family Man programme which focuses on reducing reoffending.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Safe Ground is a charity which was established in 1995 to work with men in the criminal justice system and in the wider community. As part of its work, Safe Ground manages two prison programmes - *Family Man* and *Fathers Inside*. Since 2003 these two programmes have been delivered in almost 50 adult and young adult male prison establishments across England and Wales, with over 5,000 graduates achieving more than 12,000 nationally recognised qualifications. Over the past decade these programmes have undergone a number of evaluations, the aim of which has been to monitor what works, to modify and update the programme delivery and to develop the programmes from an evidenced based perspective. This evaluation was commissioned by Safe Ground in 2012 to examine the Family Man (FM) programme from the perspective of the students², their supporters and those who deliver the programme.

Understanding desistance

Few phenomena in criminology are as widely acknowledged and as poorly understood as desistance from crime. (Maruna, 1997)

Whilst desistance is a poorly understood concept, it is generally defined as “ceasing to do something” and as such it is not an event that happens but rather “the sustained absence of a certain type of event” (Maruna, 2001). Laub and Sampson (2001) distinguished between stopping altogether and desisting from crime, the former being the time at which criminal activity effectively stops, the latter being the “causal process” that supports such a termination. Desistance from crime is not a distinct, single episode that presents itself in an offender’s lifetime; it is a phase or transition, a coming together of multiple events or experiences. Understanding what assists offenders to desist from offending is, however, complex.

A number of theorists (Hindelang, 1981; Farrington, 1986; Sullivan, 1989; Rowe and Tittle, 1997) have reported that desistance is part of a natural process generally brought about by offenders simply growing out of crime, which Matza (1964) termed “maturational reform”. Although this concept was – and still is - widely accepted, it has also been acknowledged as being too simplistic, due to the fact that many offenders do not cease to commit crime and will continue to offend beyond their late teenage

² Throughout this report we refer to the men who take part in the Family Man programme as students, and the programme tutors as facilitators. The term supporter is used throughout to describe the adult who has been selected by the student to assist them throughout the programme.

years. Building on the work of earlier theorists Moffitt (1993) identified a second type of offender, the “life-course persistent offender” who begins their criminal career much earlier and continues way beyond their teenage years. This drew on the view that, beyond age alone, it is a combination of factors that tend to bring about the conclusion of a criminal career. Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986) claimed that growing tired of being incarcerated, becoming aware of the possibility of longer prison sentences, and a reassessment of what is important, are all elements that cross the minds of longer-term criminals who gradually stop offending. Laub and Sampson (2001) echoed this viewpoint claiming that a good marriage, stable work or a transformation of identity can play a key role in encouraging and developing the desistance process once it has begun. This often occurs at the same time as an individual discovers that the offending lifestyle is no longer an exciting or desirable one.

The impact of imprisonment on families

There is a wide consensus on the importance of family dysfunction in relation to an individual’s involvement in crime, and of the intactness and integrity of families in supporting individuals released from prison. Arguably, the convergence of evidence leaves it virtually unquestionable that this is an important and yet neglected area of provision for prisoners, and that if such work can be done well it should yield both individual and societal benefits. (McGuire, 2009 page 8)

Imprisonment of a family member often presents a severe challenge to the maintenance of family relationships. Clarke et al (2005) and Dyer (2005) both discussed the challenges posed by prison to men’s identities as fathers. Both found that the prison environment makes it difficult for men to perform activities associated with fathering, such as making a financial contribution to their family or developing emotional connections, which both authors believed caused distress and difficulty when resuming the role of father upon release. Clarke et al (2005) also commented that prisoners with children often need to develop a fathering script that is able to compensate for their inability to take part in activities and support outside prison. Both Clarke et al (2005) and Dyer (2005) highlighted the importance of male prisoners maintaining contact with the mother of their children, as it is this person who will play a vital role in a male prisoner maintaining contact with his children.

When a family member is imprisoned those who remain at home are often left to cope with a range of emotional and practical difficulties, including isolation, fear of stigma, financial difficulties and increased challenges of caring for children alone (Codd, 1998). Maintaining contact with a prisoner, supplying money for phone cards and travelling to visits have all been highlighted as representing a significant burden for those outside (Noble, 1995). Christian et al (2006) reported that the behaviour of a prisoner upon release and the assistance they tend to need during the resettlement process, can sometimes

lead families to feel resentful and let-down. However, Williams et al (2012) found that prisoners who were not actively supported by their partner or family members during their sentence were up to six times more likely to offend during their first year back in the community compared to those whose families remained in contact during the sentence. Ministry of Justice research (2008) also found that prisoners who were visited by a partner or family member had a reoffending rate of 39% lower than those who had no received visits (May C. et al, 2008).

Social capital is now widely acknowledged as an important element in protecting an individual from re-offending. Social capital refers to the bonds we have with family, friends, the wider community, work, other institutions and our interests. If a rehabilitating offender has strong bonds these will strengthen his sense of belonging which will aid the rehabilitation process and help protect against further offending. The extent to which an individual is able to create, accumulate and maintain social bonds and emotional attachments will contribute to protecting that individual from returning to an offending lifestyle. Farrall (2004) believed that strong bonds with close family members were an important element in promoting the desistance process “by increasing an individual’s stock of social capital”.

Sampson, Laub and Wimer (2006) analysed the life trajectories of a sample of 500 young offenders which were collected over a 25-year period by Glueck and Glueck for their study of juvenile delinquency and adult crime (1950; 1968). Using counterfactual methods of causal inference, including tracking and interviewing some members of the Guecks’ study, they found that “marriage is a potentially transformative institution that may assist in promoting desistance from criminal behaviour”, broadening this out to include cohabiting (Sampson et al, 2006: 501). Elsewhere, Laub and Sampson state that: “job stability and marital attachment in adulthood were significantly related to changes in adult crime – the stronger the adult ties to work and family, the less crime and deviance among both delinquents and controls” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 20). These findings were also reported by Horney et al (1995 cited in Laub and Sampson 2001); Gibbens (1984 cited in Laub and Sampson, 2001); and Farrington and West (1995).

Self-identity and desistance

Whilst maintaining strong bonds with a range of individuals and institutions can have a positive impact on an individual’s rehabilitation, Shover (1985 cited in Laub and Sampson, 2001) examined the importance of an individual’s self-identity. He distinguished between two types of change that occur in an offender’s lifetime – “orientational” and “interpersonal” change. The former consists of finding a new perspective or self-identity, the latter focuses on relationships with others and establishing bonds. For

Shover, these conventional activities reinforce non-criminal identities. “Successful creation of bonds with conventional others and lines of legitimate activity indisputably is the most important contingency that causes men to alter or terminate their criminal careers” (Shover, 1996, pg. 129 cited in Laub and Sampson, 2001). Building on Shover’s work, Maruna (2001) discusses the importance of building a positive and secure self-identity, restructuring their perception of themselves. For Maruna the desistance journey is about an offender “making sense” of past life events and possibly redeeming themselves by setting and achieving targets that they and society as a whole view as respectable and worthy, such as legitimate employment and raising a family. Ex-offenders in, Maruna’s experience, often go beyond this and make “good use” of their past criminal experiences by helping others in potentially similar situations to avoid the traps they did, for example by volunteering for services or by becoming mentors.

Current policy

The role of family relationships in reducing reoffending has been acknowledged by policy makers for a number of years (for example see Ditchfield, 1994). From the 1980s successive governments have emphasised the importance of demonstrating the effectiveness of offender-based interventions, which is perhaps why by the mid-1990s, the reliance on ‘just deserts’ punishment was waning, whilst interest in the ‘what works’ agenda was increasing. Evidence based practice formed an integral element of the ‘what works’ agenda, which sought to identify successful interventions alongside ways of managing offenders.

The prisoner’s family relationships have been given prominence in various government publications. In 1991 the Woolf Report stated that: “The disruption of the prisoner’s position within the family unit represents one of the most distressing aspects of imprisonment.... Enabling prisoners, so far as possible, to stay in close and meaningful contact with the family is therefore an essential part of humane treatment.” (Woolf, 1991 paragraph 14.223). Not only is this a favourable approach in terms of limiting the collateral damage inflicted on the individual and his family members, but it also gives rise to the claim that prisoners themselves may reap benefits from continual family contact, benefits that can stretch to the wider society if the strengthening of family bonds can assist the individual in the road towards desistance from crime. Indeed the Social Exclusion Unit’s report on *Reducing Reoffending by Ex-prisoners* (2002) affirms that “...maintaining family relationships can help to prevent prisoners reoffending and can assist them to successfully settle in the community”.

In the UK and elsewhere the interest in preserving and fostering family relationships among offenders has led to the introduction of a range of measures in prison, including extended family visits, improving

facilities for visits via the establishment of visitor's centres, and support workers for offenders families as well as a range of educational interventions with prisoners, including parenting skills and relationships courses. Support workers are often based in visitors centres and available to the families of prisoners to assist with problems related to the absence of an imprisoned parent, such as disruptive behaviour at school.

The National Reducing Reoffending Delivery Plan of 2005 includes children and families as one of the seven pathways³ to resettlement. This illustrates government commitment to developing the family relationships of offenders and to supporting their families and children, although it has been described as one of the least developed pathways (Boswell and Poland, 2008). More recently NOMS has included family and marital relationships as a criminogenic need, linking this to the wider Troubled Families programme run by the Department for Communities and Local Government. NOMS 2012 commissioning intentions list relationship coaching and family visits as promising approaches as well as considering interventions targeting the offender and their family together as effective (NOMS, 2012).

The promotion of prisoners' family relationships is now recognised both in theory and policy as playing a valuable role in supporting desistance from crime and assisting in the successful resettlement of offenders. In part it is this recognition that has led the government to support interventions like the Family Man programme and encourage their development.

The Family Man programme

Family Man (FM) is one of two programmes developed and managed by Safe Ground on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The FM programme has been delivered in adult male prisons in England and Wales since 2002. The programme has an arts-based approach, utilising drama, fiction and group-work in combination with individual written work. Family Man aims to:

- encourage students to work towards sustained positive attitudinal and behavioural change
- encourage students to engage with further education, training and resettlement initiatives
- provide an opportunity for the student's supporter to participate in the programme and contribute to his resettlement
- assist the student to improve his employability skills (through educational attainment) and contribute to his personal development
- maintain/improve and build on the offender's relationship with his family and/or those close to him

³ Accommodation; education, training and employment; health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; and attitudes thinking and behaviour.

- reduce the offender's risk of reoffending by equipping him with the skills and motivation to re-integrate into his family, community and workplace on release

The programme consists of two induction sessions and 42 lessons delivered over an eight week period. In addition students attend a "What Next" day with their nominated supporter, and a final "Family Visit" day, which is also attended by their supporter and other close relatives. There is a supporter only session, which is not attended by the students. The role of supporter was introduced into the FM programme in 2008; each student nominates a supporter, usually a relative, partner, close friend or a volunteer recruited by the FM team. The supporter role must be fulfilled by someone over the age of 18 years. Supporters attend three workshops, the first is a supporter only session which introduces them to the FM programme, shows them some examples of the men's work, and guides supporters through the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) model of goal-setting. At this session supporters are asked to identify achievable goals for the student they are supporting to work towards whilst in prison. The following two workshops take place roughly a week later on the same day. In the first session the student and supporter work together and compare their Family Action Plans and agree a goal for the student. In the second session the student and supporter attend a 'What Next?' event. On this day representatives from a range of organisations working with offenders, for example, drug and alcohol teams, offender managers, job centre staff, children's organisations and education agencies are invited to attend. The aim of the 'What Next' day is to connect students and supporters with agencies that are able to provide assistance to the student upon release.

The research aims and evaluation outcomes of interest

The aims of the evaluation were to assess:

- students' perceptions of family relationships, themselves, educational opportunities and the impact of their offending on themselves and family members
- supporters' perceptions of family relationships, the impact of the student's offending on themselves and other family members, the possible impact of the FM programme
- the views and perceptions of FM facilitators/educators⁴ of the perceived benefits of the programme on individuals
- the cost-effectiveness of the programme
- the longer-term reoffending rates of a cohort of Family Man graduates from 2008-2010

The evaluation outcomes of interest were:

⁴ The terms facilitator and educator are used interchangeably in this report. Facilitators are prison staff that manage and run the FM programme, educators are education staff that run and manage the FM programme.

- changes in students' and supporters' perceptions of their family relationships and of themselves
- the cost-effectiveness of the programme
- the impact of the programme on measured reoffending rates

The research methodology

The study used mainly qualitative research methods and comprised six core elements:

1. A literature review
2. Two surveys - pre and post programme - conducted with programme participants
3. Two surveys - pre and post programme - conducted with programme supporters
4. Semi-structured interviews with Family Man facilitators
5. A cost-benefit analysis of the Family Man programme
6. A reoffending study of released Family Man graduates

The literature review

The literature review focused on the desistance process, the role of relationships within this process and the impact and importance of social capital, bonding, and social identity. Search terms used, included combinations of: desistance, reoffen*, social capital, human capital, family, intervention, father, child*, prison. Separate searches were targeted at desistance, prisoners, family relationships and interventions. The following databases were consulted:

- EBSCO Academic Search Complete
- PsychINFO
- Campbell Collaboration's register of Systematic Reviews in Crime and Justice

The database search was supplemented by consulting the following peer-reviewed journals:

- American Journal of Criminal Justice
- British Journal of Criminology
- Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, & Practice about Men as Fathers
- Family Process

In addition, we used material from reviews of desistance and family relationships conducted by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research and mined previous evaluation reports of Family Man for relevant literature (Boswell, B. and Wood, M. 2011; McGuire, J., 2009; Boswell, G. and Poland, J. 2008)

The websites of a number of government departments and charities were also searched for relevant publications, including the Ministry of Justice, Department for Communities and Local Governments, Department for Education, Prison Reform Trust and Safe Ground. The bibliographies of the material used were cross-checked for further relevant references.

The student and supporter surveys

A pre- and post- intervention survey was conducted with FM participants and their supporters. For participants, the survey examined:

- attitudes towards family relationships (pre and post FM programme)
- views of previous/planned educational achievements and opportunities
- quality of family contact (pre and post FM programme)
- perceptions of themselves in relation to their offending behaviour and motivation to change
- expectations, views and experiences of the FM programme
- plans post release

For supporters the survey examined

- attitudes towards relationship with FM participant (pre and post FM programme),
- quality of family contact (pre-sentence and post programme),
- perceptions of the FM participant's willingness to change (pre and post programme)
- expectations, views and experiences of the FM programme
- plans post release.

The surveys were a combination of both open and closed questions. Opinions expressed in the report from students, supporters and facilitators are from the open ended questions.

In total 76 Family Man students completed a pre-questionnaire and 67 students completed both a pre- and post-questionnaire; 56 supporters completed a pre-questionnaire and 34 completed both a pre- and post-questionnaire.

Family Man is delivered across seven sites; this evaluation represents the views of a sample of men and their supporters who completed the course in 2012/2013 from three prison establishments. The evaluation captured the views of a very small sample of non-completers from one of the three prisons. This evaluation therefore lacks the views and opinions of the non-completers of the Family Man programme. Whilst this is not necessarily a methodological limitation the findings should be read with this in mind, as the non-completers are likely to be the programme's greatest critics.

Semi-structured interviews with Family Man facilitators

In addition to the survey conducted with participants and their supporters, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 FM facilitators (those who run the programme) from three prisons. Facilitators included: prison officers, family interventions and family visit co-ordinators, a departmental lead on reducing reoffending, family development and support workers, a discipline officer and a FM lead trainer. These interviews were face-to-face and explored facilitators' views about the programme, its impact, the role of the supporter and/or mentor, elements of the programme they considered to be successful and those they thought needed to be improved or adapted. It should be noted that interviews were conducted with staff from three prison establishments. Findings from these interviews are illustrative of the views of these staff and do not necessarily represent the views of all staff who deliver the Family Man programme within the prison system.

Cost benefit analysis and Reoffending data

Two principal approaches were adopted to assess the impact of the FM programme. We sought to measure the impact of FM on reoffending and to use the data gathered in that process to undertake a cost benefit analysis – in essence, examining whether investing in the FM programme results in costs or savings to the public purse.

Reoffending

A formal request was submitted in May 2012 to the National Research Committee for reoffending data on Family Man programme graduates which was approved a short time later. Whilst waiting for the analysis of these data from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Safe Ground was offered the opportunity to submit data to the newly launched Justice Data Lab⁵. To use the service, organisations simply supply the Data Lab with details of the offenders who they have worked with and information about the services they have provided. The Justice Data Lab will then supply aggregate one-year proven reoffending rates for that group, and, most importantly, that of a control group of similar offenders who had been matched on a number of static risk factors.

Safe Ground decided to withdraw the ICPR submission to the MoJ and chose, instead, to be one of the first organisations to make use of the new Data Lab. It submitted information on 333 offenders who had

⁵ The data lab is a service open to non-statutory organisations working with offenders who want to evidence the effectiveness of their work in reducing reoffending.

completed the FM programme between 2005 and 2011 in six custodial establishments (Belmarsh, Birmingham, Bristol, Highpoint, Leeds and Wandsworth)⁶.

The Data Lab successfully matched 291 of the 333 offenders to the Police National computer, a match rate of 87%. The main reason for not matching the remaining 13% was that Safe Ground was unable to provide a date of birth (6.9%) or a first name (0.6%) for those students. Of the 291 offenders, Data Lab measured the reoffending rate of 83. The remainder were unable to be included as they were either still serving their sentence or had been released post-2011.

Cost Benefit Analysis

We undertook a cost benefit analysis of the FM programme using a straightforward methodology. Firstly, we calculated the full cost of the FM programme; this involved collecting and calculating the real costs of running each programme, including central resources in addition to the local prison-based costs. Costs were provided by Safe Ground, either directly from their financial records or via a direct request from participating prisons. Next, we examined the reoffending analysis undertaken by the MoJ Data Lab. Finally, we calculated the costs associated with the predicted reduction in reoffending.

Profile of respondents

Seventy-six Family Man students completed a pre-questionnaire and 67 students completed both a pre- and post- questionnaire. The sample of students was drawn from three prisons, one of which was privately run. Fifty-nine students were interviewed by one of the research team and 17 self-completed both the pre and post questionnaires. All of the interviewees were male see Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Surveys completed and by whom

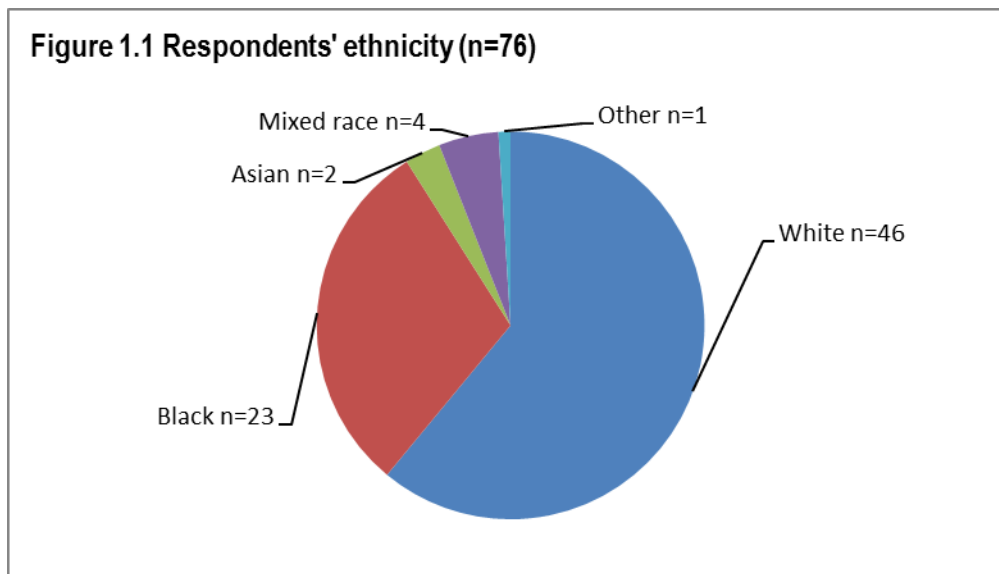
	Surveys Completed		Total
	Pre and Post	Pre only ⁷	
Researcher present	51	8	59
Self-completed	16	1	17
Total	67	9	76

All of the students had completed one of five programmes that were run in one of the three prisons during 2012/13. The majority of participants (n=58) had been sentenced prior to starting the FM programme, the remainder were on remand (n=17) or had not answered the question (n=3). Over half

⁶ 2011 was the cut-off point since reconviction data were not available for prisoners released after this date.

⁷ Leaving prison or being transferred, being down-graded to basic entitlement status, taking part in a legal or social visit during the post questionnaire visit, declining the invitation to participate in further research were reasons given by the facilitators as to why students did not complete the post-programme questionnaire.

(n=46) of the men attending the programme were white, although a significant minority described their ethnicity as black (n=23).⁸ See Figure 1.1.

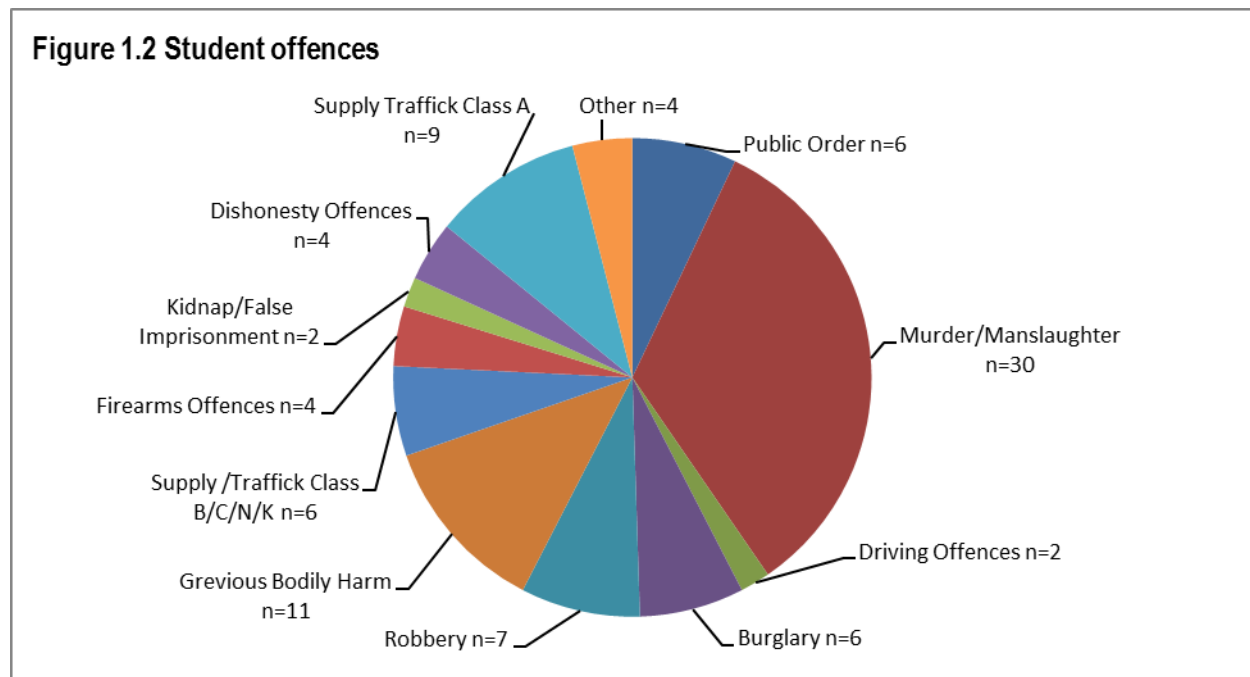


Of the 76 students, 55 described their relationship status as married, engaged or with a partner, the remainder (n=21) described themselves as single, separated, widowed or divorced. Prior to being sentenced/remanded, 55 students were either living with their partner, ex-partner or their partner and children, 19 were living alone or with their parents, one student (prior to sentence) lived alone with his children and one with his grand-parents. Before being sentenced or remanded the majority (n=63) of respondents had lived in their own home, a council or housing association property or privately rented accommodation. The remainder (13) were either homeless, living with relatives or friends or in other transient accommodation. Just under a third of respondents were unemployed prior to prison, the remainder had been employed full-time, part time or were studying.

Although having children is not a pre-requisite to being accepted onto the programme, it does, by the nature of its content, attract men who have their own children or step-children. At the time of the interview 12 students had no dependents (n=11) or declined to answer the question (n=1); the remainder (n=64) had children and of these 58 had children who were 16 years or under. The ages of the students' children ranged from new-born to 29 years.

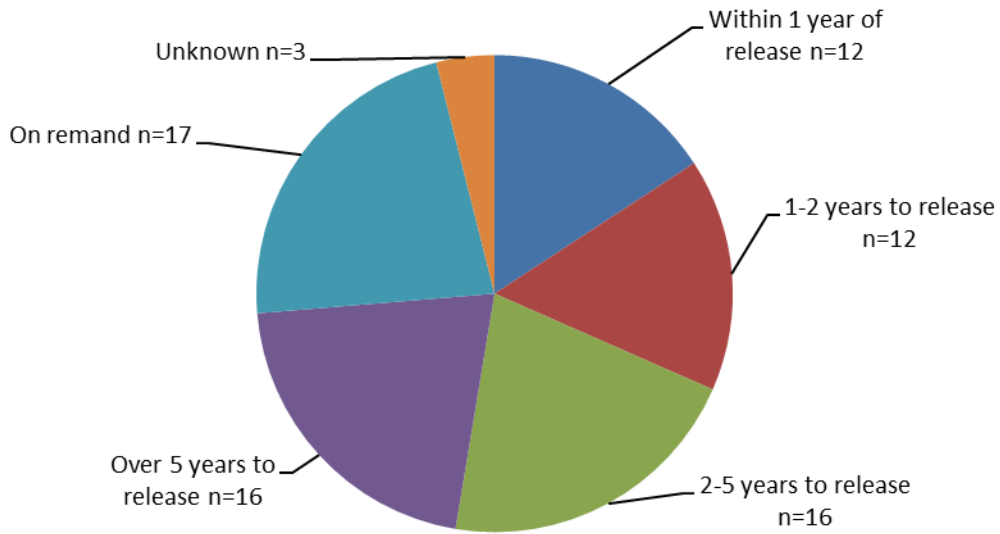
⁸ Participants were asked to self-define their ethnicity. These were then grouped to show prevailing categories.

In total, the 76 students had been remanded or sentenced for 91 offences. These are outlined in Figure 1.2.



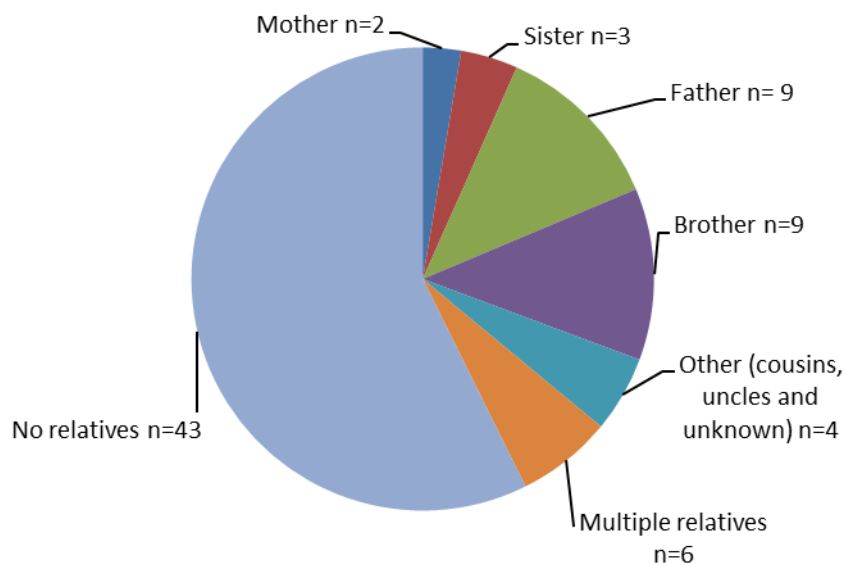
Both remanded and sentenced prisoners took part in the programme, with sentence length ranging from just under a year to life (with a tariff of 34 years). Just under a third of students had two years of their sentence left to serve and just over a fifth had between two and five years until their expected release date. The remaining (sentenced) prisoners (just over a fifth) had over five years left to serve. The others were either on remand or did not answer the question, as illustrated by figure 1.3 below. Over half the sample had served at least one previous custodial sentence. It should be noted that our sample may not be representative of all Family Man graduates. Our interviewees were selected from three prisons, Prison A held Category A prisoners, (Category A prisoners include those whose escape would be highly dangerous to the public or national security. Offences that may result in consideration for Category A or Restricted Status include: attempted murder, manslaughter, wounding with intent, rape, indecent assault, robbery or conspiracy to rob (with firearms), firearms offences, importing or supplying Class A controlled drugs, possessing or supplying explosives, offences connected with terrorism and offences under the Official Secrets Act. Prison B only held prisoners serving life sentences and the final prison, Prison C, was a privately run prison which held both adult males and young offenders who had been classed as Category B offenders. Category B offenders are those who do not require maximum security, but for whom escape still needs to be very difficult.

Figure 1.3: Timing of course in relation to release date



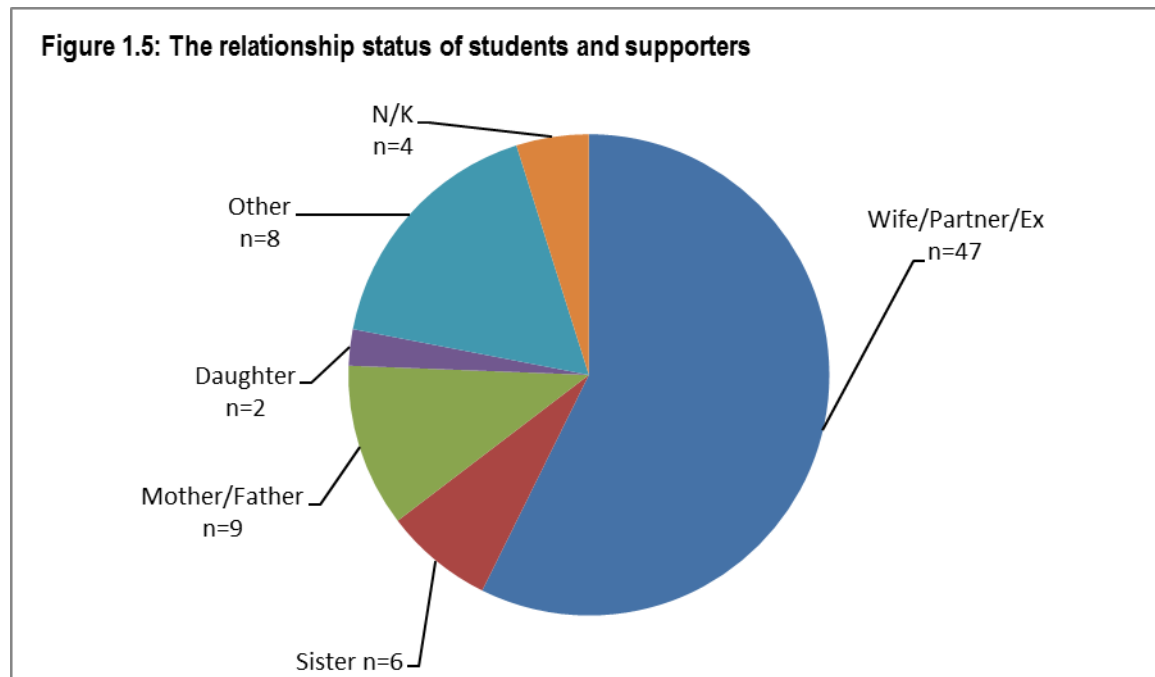
Just over two-fifths of respondents reported that they had a close family member who had also served a custodial sentence at some point (see Fig 1.4); a small number of respondents (n=6) had more than one relative who had spent time in prison. For most of those students the family member was either a father or brother.

Figure 1.4: Relatives who have been in prison, mutually exclusive



Supporters

In total 58 supporters were interviewed from five programmes across three prisons. All but one of the supporters was female. The majority (n=47) were the wife, fiancée, partner or ex-partner of the student. Figure 1.5 illustrates the relationship status between supporter and student.



Their ages ranged from 18 – 76 years, the average (median) age was 29 years. Over half (n=31) of the supporters were under the age of 30 at the time of interview. Almost three quarters (n=42) were white. The remainder were black (n=7), mixed race (n=5) and Asian (n=4). Almost half (n=28) of the supporters worked full or part-time, just over a quarter (n=17) were unemployed or on disability allowance and the remainder were full-time carers (n=8), studying (n=3) or pensioners (n=2). Prior to imprisonment, just over half lived with their student; the remainder either lived with their - student some of the time or had separate living arrangements.

Structure of the report

Chapter two examines why students applied for a place on the FM programme, who they selected as their supporter, and their views on their family relationships, their educational achievements and expectations of the programme. These data are complemented by the views from the supporters about their expectations of the programme. Chapter three examines the views of students and supporters on completion of the programme. Chapter four examines - from the perspective of students, supporters

and facilitators - which elements of the FM programme worked well and which elements these groups were less enthusiastic about and why. Chapter five examines the measured impact of the FM programme, and finally, Chapter six outlines possible future directions for the management and implementation of Safe Ground's Family Man programme.

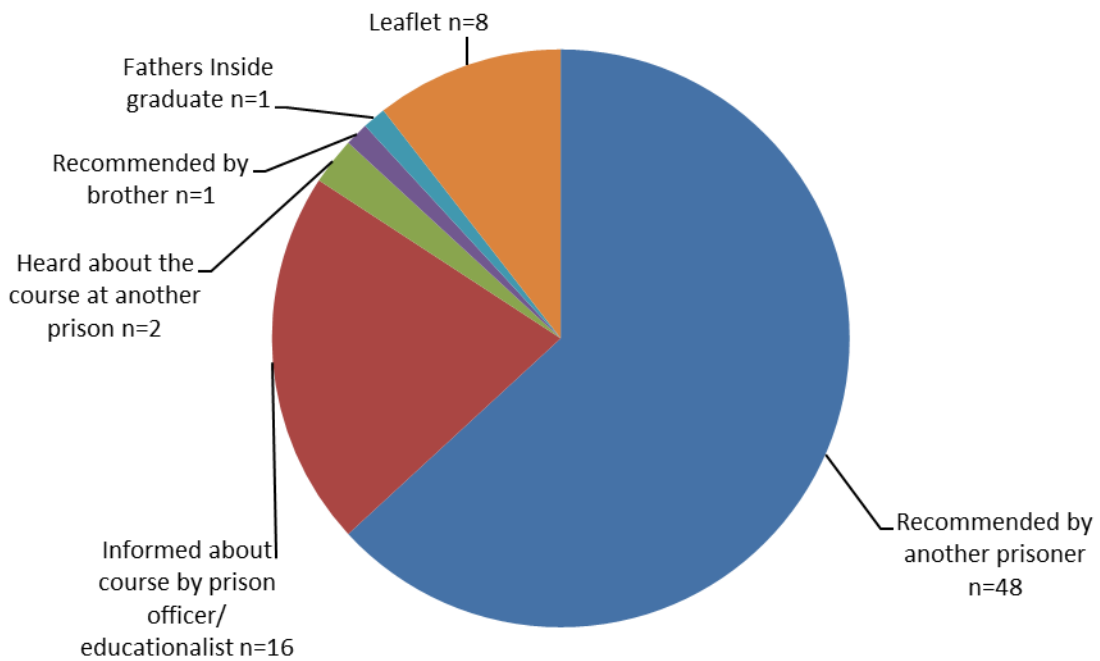
CHAPTER 2: THE FAMILY MAN PRE-PROGRAMME: VIEWS FROM STUDENTS AND SUPPORTERS

Here we present interview material from the 76 students and 58 supporters who we interviewed prior to the start of each FM programme or, in some cases, very soon after it had started. First we present our findings on what prompted our sample of students to apply for a place on a family relationships programme, who they selected to be their supporter and why; alongside these data we provide analysis on why the supporters agreed to participate. To place these data in context we also present data on the family relationships of our interviewees. Finally, we examine the early educational achievements of the students, their views on studying and their expectations of the programme.

Applying for a place on the Family Man programme

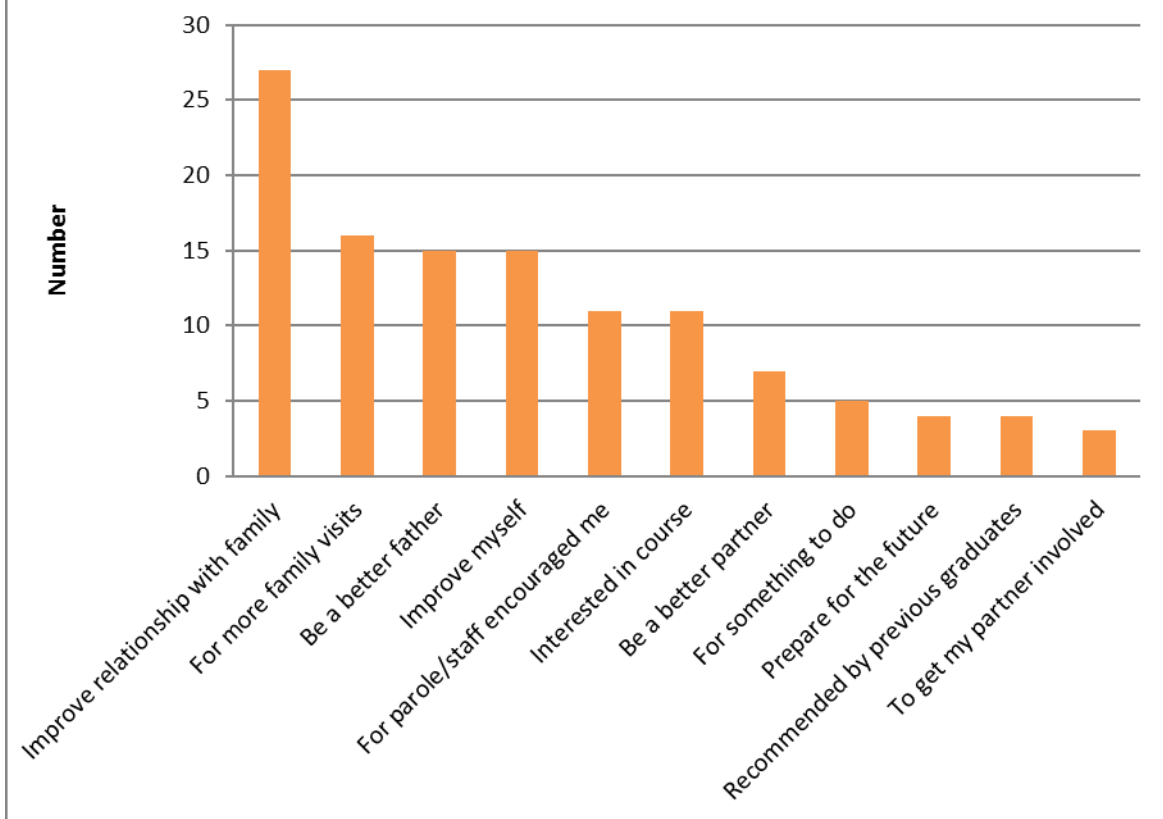
We asked all FM participants how they had found out about the programme (see Fig 2.1) and why they decided to apply for a place. Of the 76 students, almost two-thirds (n=48) had had the programme recommended to them by another prisoner, just over a fifth had heard about the programme from a prison officer or member of the prison education department, eight students had seen a leaflet for the programme, two prisoners had heard about it whilst at another prison, one student had the programme recommended to him by his brother, who had graduated from Family Man previously, and the final student had completed the Fathers Inside programme and wanted to continue studying family relationships.

Figure 2.1 How did you hear about the course? (men)



We asked all the respondents why they wanted to be considered for a place on the FM programme. Seventy-four interviewees responded, providing 118 reasons. Unsurprisingly, just over half the student sample said that they wanted to improve themselves and/or their family relationships. Few respondents appeared to sign-up on a whim or because they thought it would improve their parole chances. Figure 2.2 below provides an overview of the reasons given.

Figure 2.2 Reasons to participate in the FM programme



The following selection of interview quotes provides an illustration of the type of reasons given by students for signing -up for the FM programme:

The extra visits attracted me in the first place. Got an autistic son who I find it hard to communicate with, thought the programme would teach me some skills so I could communicate with him better.

I signed up to improve communication with the girlfriend. For the five hour visits, to play around with my daughter.

The reason why I choose to do the FM course is that I want to be a better role model to my family, also to gain knowledge and different communication skills that will help me to have a firm relationship and it's fun to be on the course.

I watched my previous cellmate go through it. Just thought it was something that would benefit me and my plans during my time here. I'm a strong believer in planning my time.

I found out from a letter when I was here that I had a daughter, did a DNA test. Since then been aware I need to become a family man. I enjoyed the drama side last time [did Father's Inside].

Had parole board last year, they mentioned the course and I was told it was intense. Thought doing this would strengthen my case for next time.

Selecting the right supporter

For the programme to be successful it is important that students select an appropriate supporter. We asked all the students who they had asked to be their supporter and why. As outlined in Chapter one, 47 men selected their partner/wife or the mother of their children to support them. The remainder chose a parent, sibling, adult daughter or son or a friend. Forty-seven men said that they chose their supporter because they were the closest person to them, the most appropriate person to fulfil the role and the person who knew them better than anyone else. Twelve students specifically mentioned choosing their supporter as a way of improving their relationship with that person. The following quotes illustrate students' thoughts about the selection of their supporter:

I wanted to get a proper close relationship with her.

Because she's my whole life, she's been through everything with me. I want to show her I'm doing more to make me a better person for her and my kids. We've had our ups and downs but since prison we value each other more.

He knows the old me and I want to show him the new me. It's good to have family to understand what we're going through.

*Because she understands me, she's a good listener. She's seen the worse and best of me. I don't think I can disappoint her anymore.
She's suffering the most from this sentence; she says it all the time. I hope I don't die before I come out.*

Why become a supporter?

An important element of the FM programme is the role of the supporter. As part of the evaluation we asked our sample of supporters how they were approached to become a supporter and why they agreed to take on the role. Of the 58 supporters, half (n=29) discussed the programme with the student prior to the student passing their contact details to the programme facilitator. Just over a third (n=21) were expected to be a supporter with little discussion taking place and seven were told that they had been put forward with no discussion. The final supporter found out that she had been put forward for the role when the facilitator phoned her to discuss the date of the first session; whilst not consulted she was, however, happy to support her student.

Supporters decided to accept the invitation to assist their student for a variety of reasons. Two-thirds (n=37), wanted to be part of the programme to encourage and help their student and be there for him. Ten supporters said that the additional visits for them and their children were the motivating factor and twelve women felt it was their duty to support the student as wife, partner, mum or sibling. Six students specifically mentioned their hope that the programme would benefit them as much as the student.t.

Three supporters said they had no choice, one said it was “because I love him” and the final supporter said it was to see her partner perform in the final play. The following quotes highlight some of the reasons behind supporters’ decisions to take on the role:

Because I'm willing to do whatever it takes. I'm really pleased he's doing this course so I'll do anything to support him.

I'm his mum. Everyone can try on their own but if you've got someone behind you it's better, it's just easier.

Because I love him, I would do anything for him. The youngest [child] one really needs to spend time with him in a more free environment. Any help for the family is positive.

I'd do anything to have that family day. I've got a child, that was it at first. Now I know a bit and it seems a really good thing to do anyway.

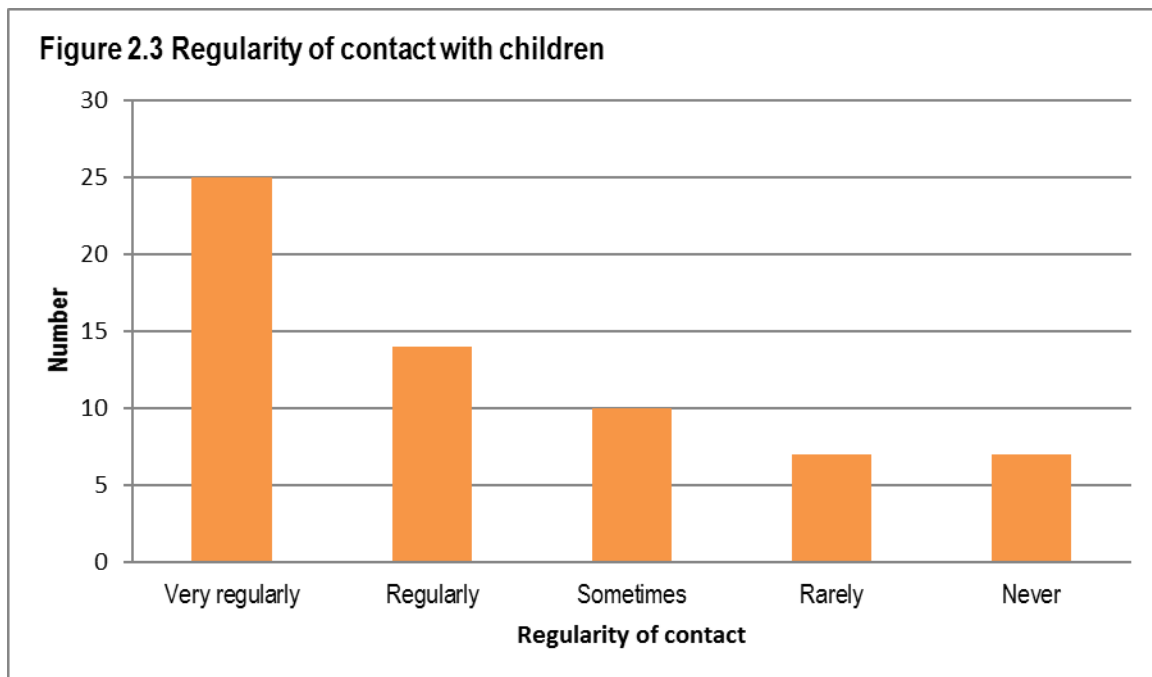
Just to be there for him, to be a part of it. It's good for me to be a part of his life while he's in here.

Family relationships

One of the stated aims of the FM programme is to support students and teach them new skills to help them maintain positive family ties whilst they are in prison. For the students with children, this is of particular importance. To understand the possible impact of the programme in this area, we asked the fathers about their relationship with their children, about the quality of time spent with their children prior to being sentenced and the contact they had since imprisonment. Of the 62 men who answered the question ‘how would you describe your relationship with your children’, all but two reported that it was either ‘good’ (n=15) or ‘very good’ (n=43). This view was echoed by the supporters; of the 45 supporters all but two described the relationship between the student and his children as either ‘positive’ (n=11) or ‘very positive’ (n=32). Four-fifths of fathers described the quality of time they spent with their family prior to being sentenced or remanded as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ compared with a fifth who described the time spent with families as ‘bad’, ‘very bad’ or ‘neither good nor bad’.

Twenty-two students said that since being sentenced/remanded, the contact with their children was ‘never’, ‘rare’ or ‘infrequent’, and a further 13 students did, however, disclose that they had maintained good contact with some of their children but not others. Figure 2.3 below illustrates the regularity of contact between the students and their children. For many of our interviewees, maintaining contact with children was important; in addition to seeing their children on family visits the men also talked to their

children on the phone (n=50) and wrote to them (n=45)⁹. Fifteen men also reported sending story tapes home for their children to listen to.



We asked the mothers during the supporter interviews if they had told their children that their father was in prison and if yes, whether they had disclosed the offence he had been sentenced or remanded for. Four supporters declined to answer the question. Of the remaining 42, only twelve had told their children that their father was in prison and what he had been sentenced or remanded for. The same number (n=12) had admitted to their children that their father was in prison but had not disclosed for what offence and the remainder (n=18) had kept their children in the dark. Deciding whether or not to tell a child about their father’s imprisonment can be difficult. Some supporters had told older but not younger children and others had provided an alternative explanation for the absence, including that their dad was working abroad, or was working rather than residing in the prison.

Whatever decision a mother makes regarding disclosure of a father’s imprisonment, the reality of a father serving a sentence and therefore being away from home is likely to change the relationship between the mother and her children as many mothers take on the sole responsibility for parenting with little or no family assistance. Just over two-thirds (n=30/43) thought their relationship with their children

⁹ A number of interviewees had both pre-school and school aged children. The students wrote to and talked on the telephone to those who were able to read, understand letters and talk on the phone.

had altered to some degree. Sixteen supporters reported that their relationship with their children had become stronger; eight mentioned that children were either missing their dad or were experiencing emotional problems due to his absence; six felt they had to be both mum and dad, which was stressful and hard work. Other issues that they raised included that children's school work was suffering and that their children were angry or exhibiting behavioural problems. The following quotes illustrate how the relationship between supporters and their children had changed due to the imprisonment of their partner/husband:

My youngest is very clingy to me, he's a daddy's boy but now I have to be his daddy – he's wetting his bed again.

I just feel exhausted. I don't have enough time to give them what they need. I can't deal with the pressure from both.

My boy clings on and doesn't want to leave my side, he's also trying it on when he gets told off.

With my son [aged 14] there's a lot of pressure being put on him, he was told he was man of the house, he didn't want that. I have a closer relationship with both of them now, it's just me and them.

My two eldest have noticed - it's taken a toll in school and out, they've reacted badly, they're angry with me. My daughter cries, my son is behind in school. We're all a lot closer though.

My little girl has become a lot more sensitive and a lot more clingy. She was quite close to him so she feels like she's essentially been left.

Finally, we asked the fathers on the programme (N62) what impact they thought their imprisonment was having on their children¹⁰. Just under half (n=27) thought their absence was emotionally upsetting for children, just under a fifth felt their children were being denied a father figure or a role model and a further 25 noted that they were missing out on valuable bonding time. Eleven mentioned that their children's education and behaviour were being effected by their absence. The following quotes highlight students' perceptions of the impact of their imprisonment on their children:

It's impacted a lot, it's affecting my three year old; he's attacking my missus and biting other kids.

My two youngest are really suffering. My son is really affected. They all know I'm in prison but not what for.

At first I didn't really think this prison sentence would have any impact but as the time goes on I get to understand that this is affecting everyone at home so badly.

¹⁰ Students gave more than one answer to this question. From the 62 students 106 responses were recorded.

It broke their hearts. I didn't see them for 18 months during trial. I couldn't even speak to them at the first visit.

The impact is massive. It's changed all their relationships, all three [children] reacted differently. The eldest closed in on himself, my middle daughter became a rebel, my youngest became clingy and still is.

It's been bad, we've had problems with our eldest son, he threatened to commit suicide. The youngest is coping OK.

Education

A number of research studies have shown that education and vocational training can have a positive impact on the reoffending rates of offenders (Civitas, 2010). For example, Wilson et al's (2000) review of 33 studies found that the recidivism rate for those who received an educational intervention whilst imprisoned was 37 per cent compared with a reoffending rate of 50 per cent for a control group who did not.

The FM programme has been designed so that it can be delivered to a group of students with mixed educational abilities. It is, however, a requirement that participants are able to understand sufficient English to follow instructions and if there are two or more students with reading and writing difficulties, the programme manual recommends that a peer mentor (a previous FM graduate) is allocated to the group to support the FM facilitators.

Education is at the heart of the FM programme; it is a requirement that students are submitted for a minimum of two National Open College Network (NOCN) or City and Guilds awards. The three units students can earn awards for are: Family Relationships, Developing Personal Development Skills and Developing Group and Team Work Communication Skills. To enable students to benefit from the programme, it is important that, potential students are informed about the intensive nature of the programme, and the level of studying involved, both in the classroom during the day and at night in their cell. It is important for potential students and programme facilitators that places are offered only to men who understand the nature of the programme, who are happy to attend full-time for seven weeks and are willing to engage with the learning process in a meaningful and positive way.

As part of the evaluation we wanted to gain an understanding of participants' educational achievements and history and their views on studying whilst serving their sentence in order to assess whether the selection process enables facilitators to offer places to prisoners who are best suited to the programme.

Of the 76 students who completed the pre-programme interview, the average age at which they left formal full-time education was 16 (range 11 – 23 years). A third of interviewees had left school prior to their 16th birthday. Although the numbers were small just over half (7 of 13 men) of those sentenced for a drug offence had left school prior to their 16th birthday compared to just over a third (14 of 40 men) of those convicted of a violent offence. Just under half (n=37) the sample had been excluded from school, mostly this occurred prior to their 16th birthday. Just over a quarter were excluded for fighting; other reasons given were disruptive behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, rudeness and constant truanting.

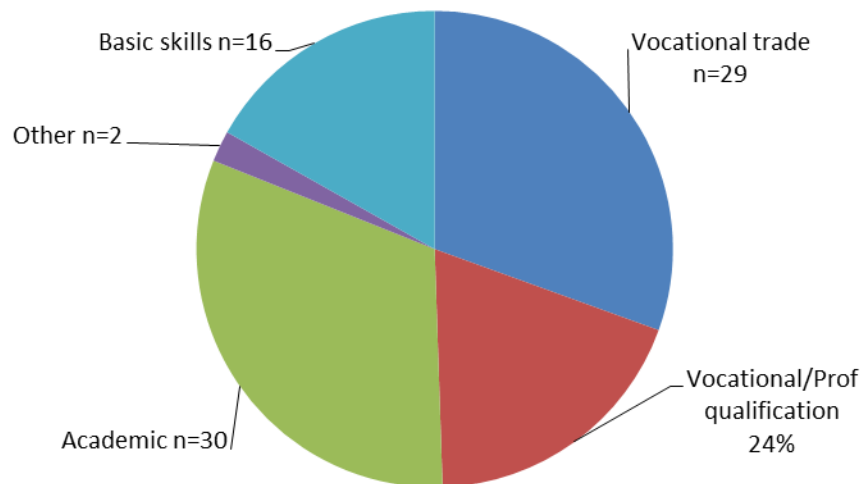
Given that the delivery of the FM programme is in the format of formal lessons, it was surprising that almost four-fifths of the sample described their attitude to education as either 'positive' or 'very positive'. In total, only seven students described their attitude to education as 'negative' or 'very negative'. Of these, four had left school before they were 16 and four had been excluded from school; only one of the seven had left school with any qualifications. However, all seven had undertaken programmes whilst in prison and four of the seven were interested in pursuing programmes upon release. Interestingly, of the 37 students who had been excluded from school, 27 described their attitude to education as 'positive' or 'very positive': it seems, however, quite likely that they developed this positivity later in life.

Just over half the sample (n=41) had qualifications ranging from GCSE's and A' levels to NVQs, HNDs and degrees, gained in school, in the community since leaving school, and in prison.

Only eight prisoners stated that they were not interested (n=7) or unsure (n=1) about continuing with either academic or vocational studying after the FM programme. Figure 2.4 below illustrates the type of ETE programmes the remaining students were interested in pursuing upon completion of the FM programme¹¹.

¹¹ Students were able to list more than one course.

Figure 2.4: Future education/training N=95



Expectations of the FM programme

Managing expectations, especially in a prison context, can be difficult. If a student is to successfully complete a programme, it is important that he is aware of what the programme is able to deliver, what he should expect to achieve, alongside understanding the effort involved. Prior to the start of each programme we asked the students what they wanted to gain from the FM programme. The most frequent response (n=27) was a desire to see things from the perspective of their family, 15 students wanted the programme to help them improve their family relationships, just under a fifth wanted to become more adept at communicating and around one in ten students wanted the programme to help them be better role models for their children. The following quotes illustrate these aspirations:

I want a stronger bond with my family, the ability to be a father.

I need to improve the time I spend with my girlfriend, build on our relationship through communication.

I want to learn how to open up and not be selfish and have fun.

To learn more, how to do better. Improve relationships with family. To stop and think before I do anything stupid.

I want to be a better parent, not be selfish, realise other people are affected by my actions.

I want to be more open with myself about my feelings towards my family, to be more honest, to show more emotions. I was abused in childhood, so it's hard to show feelings.

We also wanted to capture what – if anything – supporters wanted to achieve through participation. Interestingly, several had not thought about this until we asked. Twelve supporters hoped to gain a better understanding of the student and vice versa, nine wanted the programme to improve their parenting skills and to create a stronger family unit, eight supporters wanted their student to be a better and more supportive partner, the same number wanted their student to take responsibility for his actions, five supporters were hoping the programme would bring them closer together. The remainder wanted their children to 'get their dad back', wanted 'nothing', wanted the student to stay out of prison, to be released earlier than expected and for the student to achieve and learn something from the programme. The following quotes illustrate these aspirations:

[I want] us to have a better understanding of life when he gets home. For him to listen a bit more.

[I want] the satisfaction that he will finally stand on his own two feet and make decisions and not spend his life inside.

[I want him to] be a better father, to have more understanding of what I'm going through.

I don't know, hopefully he'll be a better partner, he's always been a good father.

[I want him to] understand why he's here, why he keeps re-offending, what the problems are, to help him through challenges.

I want my boyfriend back the way he used to be, not the stupid vulnerable kid, I want him to work for what he wants.

In Summary

- Seventy-six men from three prisons and 58 supporters took part in the Family Man evaluation;
- Almost two-thirds of students had the programme recommended to them by another prisoner;
- Just over half the students signed up to the programme to 'improve themselves and/or their family relationships';
- Just under two-thirds of men selected their partner/wife or the mother of their children to be their supporter;
- Thirty-seven supporters wanted to be part of the programme to provide encouragement and help;

- Almost all the men with children (58/62) described their relationship with their children prior to the programme as either 'good' or 'very good';
- Four-fifths of fathers described the quality of time they spent with their family prior to being sentenced or remanded as 'very good' or 'good';
- Twenty-two students reported that since being imprisoned, contact with their children was 'never', 'rare' or 'infrequent';
- Just over a quarter of the supporters (12/42) had told their children that their father was in prison and what he had been sentenced or remanded for;
- Just under half the fathers (n=27) thought their absence was emotionally upsetting for their children;
- Eleven thought their children's education and behaviour was being affected by their absence;
- Four-fifths of the sample described their attitude to education as either 'positive' or 'very positive';
- Just over half the sample (n=41) had educational or vocational qualifications;
- Twenty-seven wanted the programme to help them to see things from the perspective of their family and 15 wanted the programme to provide them with the tools to improve their family relationships;
- Twelve supporters wanted the programme to help them better understand their student and vice versa.

CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY MAN POST-PROGRAMME: VIEWS FROM STUDENTS, SUPPORTERS AND FACILITATORS

In this chapter we present findings from the post-programme questionnaire. Of the 67 students who took part in a pre-programme interview, 63 completed the programme and four left of their own volition^{12,13}. The majority (21/34) of the supporters were either partners or wives. We have supplemented the student and supporter interviews with data from the facilitator interviews (N=10). We discuss key elements of the programme, including the supporters' day, the letter writing and programme work, the 'What Next' day and the graduation day.

The Family Man programme

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the FM programme consists of 42 classroom-based lessons and a small number of student and supporter sessions. Each lesson provides just over two and a half hours of material and activities are structured with a view to complementing units from the National Open College Network Qualifications in Progression:

- Family Relationships, Level 1
- Developing Personal Development Skills, Level 1
- Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills, Level 1

Students are required to complete additional work after each lesson and are expected to set aside up to an hour for cell work following each lesson. The programme is delivered in a group format and each student is expected to attend every session as well as the additional days that are set aside for both students and supporters. Whilst the programme follows a pre-defined structure, it has been designed with the expectation that most – if not all – of the students will be studying family relationships for the first time.

Programme structure

Designing a prison-based programme is a challenge. It must meet the needs of the prison regime, appeal to students of differing educational abilities and be just the right length to keep students engaged whilst also delivering all components of the programme in a timely manner. In Prison C, where all of the students were on life sentences, the facilitators commented that they had to adapt and

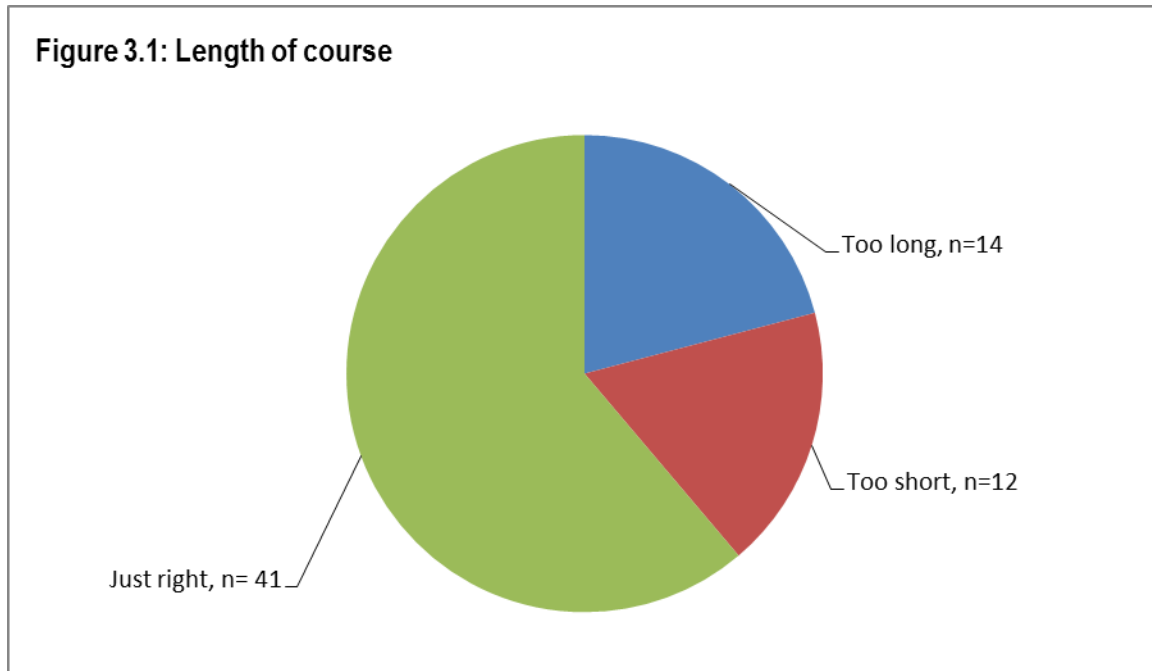
¹² Each course expected and experienced drop outs. Unfortunately we were unable to interview any non-completers from prison A or B. Prison C did, however, make these students available to us.

¹³ Reasons for the dropout included: the course was too long, irrelevant to their needs and pitched at the wrong level. One student left following a disagreement with the facilitators over the availability of soya milk.

re-structure the course to accommodate their very different needs. One of the facilitators working on this course commented that: *“By the time they begin the course they’ve all done level 1 literacy and numeracy...The course [is] geared for people leaving [prison] in the short term, so we were looking at other ways of delivering and making life-style change plans”.*

Programme length

Fifty-three of 67 students had attended all 42 sessions. Of the 14 who had missed sessions, four were non-completers. Students were asked whether the seven week programme¹⁴ was ‘too long’, ‘too short’ or ‘just right’. One fifth (n=14) thought the programme was too long, however, almost two-thirds (n=41) said that it was just right and 12 believed it was too short. Five made a specific comment about there being insufficient time to prepare for the final drama presentation. In two prisons (A and B) the majority of students felt the programme was just right (three fifths and three quarters respectively). Only two of the 37 students from prison A thought the programme was too long. Conversely, more than half (n=7) the men from prison C, where the programme was run over an extended but less intense period due to a lack of space, felt the programme should have been shorter. Figure 3.1 illustrates the students’ views regarding the length of the programme length.



¹⁴ Although the course was a seven week programme, in Prison C the seven weeks were delivered over a twelve week period.

Coursework and letter writing

As part of the programme students are expected to write four letters to their nominated supporter. With this in mind the taught element at the beginning of the programme familiarises students with the language and ideas associated with family relationships. The classroom theory is then put into practice and students are expected to articulate what they have learned by writing these letters to their supporter over a period of weeks. Interestingly, some of the more positive comments on the written element of the programme came from students who highlighted that they struggled with literacy. Several students were, however, undecided as to whether the letter writing had been a positive or negative experience and others felt the programme placed too much emphasis on letter writing and course work and not enough time on the drama element.

Unprompted, only five of the overall sample of 76 students thought the letter writing and the cell work element of the programme worked well. Nine students (unprompted) disliked having to complete cell-work¹⁵ and write letters and considered these elements to be less successful for them. The programme run at prison B and C, where Family Man was relatively new, received the most critical feedback regarding the cell work and written elements of the course. In contrast, only one student across three courses run at prison A spoke negatively about these aspects. The quotes below illustrate the students' views of the letter writing and coursework:

I'm not very good with handwriting but then again my handwriting has improved. I also [now] know where to put full stops.

There just seemed to be too much writing, sitting and listening. I was told it was drama based but didn't actually do any until the last week.

The paperwork and the cell work were good. I started off thinking I was the best dad in the world, now I know I've got a lot to do to be that.

Everything [worked well]. Drama, playing games, writing letters, meeting new people and making friends.

The whole course wasn't my cup of tea. I know I'm a good father. The play was horrible, I hated it. Don't like writing so I hated the letter writing part of the course. I was picked for the course, I didn't pick it.

¹⁵ Cell work is work set by the facilitators/educators which is specifically intended to be completed outside of the core programmes teaching hours.

Facilitators also had some criticisms of the course work and letter writing element of the programme, noting that the coursework was too simplistic for many of the students, especially those who had completed a number of prison literacy courses (mainly those on long-term sentences) and that the exercises were slightly repetitive and demeaning. In addition facilitators highlighted that they thought the course was “geared towards people on short term sentences”.

Of 53 supporters who provided an opinion about the letter writing pre-programme, 50 were positive whilst three were negative. Following the programme, 25 of 34 supporters who gave feedback about the letters were positive, three were negative and a further six were unsure. Only one had changed from indecisive to positive about the letter writing, whilst the three supporters who were negative at pre-programme interview were even more so by the end. Some described letter writing as a useful experience for their student, helping them to improve their literacy and letter writing skills. The following quotes illustrate the supporters’ views of the letter writing:

He did a literacy course when he first went in, he didn't have a full education, so literacy was really helpful. The letters reinforced it.

It was really good, to see what he's learning and has learned, good to hear what he's doing. It's given him more self-confidence. The guys who ran the course really helped. He's realised that it helps to write things, better than expressing his feelings verbally. And it was nice to get a letter.

It was ok. Didn't think it was necessary, didn't get much out of it. We spoke in-between so the letters were repetitive.

Nice to be involved in what he was doing, it's not like the other courses where you just see a certificate at the end. It was nice to have feedback and to write back.

It was like a letter from a stranger. He'd been told what to write, it shouldn't be like that for loved ones.

Three supporters felt undue pressure to reply or found the process stressful. The negative response to the letters was generally due to the supporters finding the letter style “weird” or overly formal.;

The supporters’ day

In 2008, in response to previous evaluations, Safe Ground introduced supporters’ sessions. These were initiated to enable a close (adult) family member, friend or volunteer to assist the student whilst he progressed through the programme and hopefully this support would continue post release. The first supporters’ session takes place outside the prison, usually in the prison visitors centre, and does not

involve the students. The day is intended to provide the supporters with an overview of the FM programme, show them examples of the men's work and introduce them to the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable Realistic, Time-bound) model of goal-setting. It is also a chance for the facilitators and the family support worker (FSW) to meet the supporters and get to know them in a relaxed atmosphere without the FM students being present.

Most of the supporters we interviewed viewed their first session favourably, only six of 26 provided any critical comments. Half found the information provided by the facilitators and the FSW useful and informative. Ten appreciated the opportunity to meet other supporters, whilst five praised the relaxed and open atmosphere of the day. Five supporters were pleased to have met the prison officers. Several supporters commented that "it didn't feel as if I was in a prison". The following quotes illustrate how the supporters viewed their first session:

When Dwayne went to prison I felt down, felt shit, prison is a disgrace. It was helpful to meet other people, no shame in it. I'm more confident now.

It was useful – I was able to get my head together before I went to meet him and it was useful to meet [the facilitators].

[It was good] meeting other women in the same situation. Feeling not alone. I've carried on a couple of friendships from that. It was really relaxed.

It was put together very well. I didn't feel threatened. It allowed everyone to talk to everyone. Smashing vibes, it didn't feel like I was in a prison. They pulled it off really well, covered everything.

I'm not the type to mingle so I was nervous about it, but everybody was so friendly, I really enjoyed it. It was useful to pick up on certain things. Setting targets was good - and finding they matched at the 'What Next' day.

Critical comments included that the day was 'boring', 'useless', 'not relevant' or 'repetitive'. Another supporter suggested that it would be good to have more interaction within the group rather than with the officers. The final supporter lived abroad and was angry about the pressure she felt under to attend, which put a considerable strain on her household budget. Only two of the supporters who were critical of the day were the current wife or partner of their student.

It wasn't very useful to me; I could see it was useful to others around me though.

It was just "work", I didn't enjoy it too much.

As part of the first session the supporters are asked to identify a goal that they believed their student should be working towards whilst serving their sentence. We asked all at post-programme interview what they thought their students should focus on once released. Almost three-quarters (n=25) thought he should view seeking employment or further training as an essential goal. Twenty supporters highlighted the need to focus on improving his relationship with their children and being a better father. This was followed by suggestions to concentrate on improving their relationship. Just under a third of the 34 supporters (n=11) believed that finding or resolving issues around accommodation should be a priority post release. Few supporters raised any concern around alcohol or drug problems.

The 'What Next' day

The 'What Next' day comes just after the mid-way point in the programme. It follows on from lessons which are aimed at helping students examine how they can make changes to their current situation and how they can communicate more effectively with others. Students move from relatively abstract ideas and concepts to applying what they have learned - focusing on how they can strengthen, maintain and support their own family relationships whilst incarcerated and after their release. As part of this process the FM facilitators and FSW organise a 'What Next' day. The aim of the day is to bring together students and supporters with representatives from prison departments, such as the Offender Management Unit and external agencies, for example, housing, employment and benefit advice agencies to discuss future plans, possible training ideas, benefit claims and childcare issues. In addition, part of this day is set aside for students and supporters to work on a Family Action Plan (FAP). These plans bring together the different objectives set by the student and supporter (earlier in the course) and gives both the opportunity to agree their goals for the future.

Most men and supporters considered the 'What Next' day to be useful. Of the 63 men who commented on the day, 52 rated the day as 'useful' or 'very useful'. Students and supporters appreciated the input from the external agencies, (23 mentioned this aspect), and the opportunity to spend time with their supporter (16 mentioned this). Overall students named over 35 different agencies that they had found useful. The most commonly mentioned type of service was the Offender Management Unit, Probation Service and services relating to children. Other agencies mentioned included: the Citizens Advice Bureau and housing services. Although not mentioned by many students or supporters, the facilitators also felt that many of the students benefitted from the resettlement advice made available to them at the 'What Next' day. The quotes below illustrate student's views about the day.

This day was useful because it gave me and my partner the opportunity to discuss properly a plan of action regarding our situation, as this was done in a different way to the one hour visit in the visiting hall. It was more relaxing and easier for both of us.

It was very good. I managed to speak to housing, psychology and the Offender Management Unit. Some things you didn't want to hear but it was the truth.

Good to sit down with my dad - he got an insight into my plans. All the services were there, unusual for a prison. My dad went round to see everyone. Most useful for me were probation, OMU [Offender Management Unit], PACT [Prison Advice and Care Trust]. It was good to try to get some straight answers. Normally you put an application in and I think they put them in the bin.

It opened my supporter's eyes. It turned out they didn't really know what my plans were. It helped us sing from the same hymn sheet. It opened things up with resettlement. Information on insurance and drug services was helpful.

Five students also mentioned the day when asked a general question about what they felt had worked well on the programme, saying, for example:

My partner came and gave me her action plan of how she wants me to be [get a job] – I have a better idea of how she feels I should act.

The warm up games, the 'What Next' day, the presentation and the final visit [all worked well for me].

Six students, however, felt that the 'What Next' day held little relevance for them, four of whom attended the same course. Two of the six stated that they had work lined up after their release so they did not need this type of support, two commented that their release date was too far into the future to worry about what they would be doing next, one interviewee thought the day was targeted at families and another noted that there was nothing available for foreign nationals. Interestingly, although few interviewees stated that they needed assistance with alcohol or drug problems post release, these agencies were always represented at the 'What Next' day. Facilitators at Prison A questioned the commitment of some of the external agencies stating that often these services are a "let down"... *Despite arranging by email weeks before [the 'What Next' day] they then say at the last minute that they cannot attend".*

The following quotes highlight some of the dissatisfactions expressed by the students with the 'What Next' day:

It was very biased towards people leaving prison, jobless and seeking a home - I'm sorted - I can see it was good for others but not for me, my supporter didn't even attend.

There were lots of different agencies but it was all about families. Because I have no kids they all said they couldn't do anything for me.

I only attended half of it; on-going discrimination issues put a negative slant on the day and course. It was all very rushed, the day. Five minutes to fill 15 pages of goals, didn't get it done.

We also asked the supporters what they thought of the 'What Next' day. Of the 30 who answered the question, only two were dissatisfied. Like the students, the supporters were positive about the opportunity the day gave them to speak to a range of services that could assist the student and his family post release (mentioned by 18 of 28 respondents). Seven respondents were pleased to have the opportunity to set goals with their student and four had enjoyed spending the day with their student – a rare occurrence once someone has been imprisoned; this view was echoed by the facilitators, one of whom stated:

The 'What Next' day [is the best] because supporters are involved and this improves family relationships

The following quotes illustrate the views of the supporters about the 'What Next' day:

Our youngest is going through difficulties; we found organisations to help with his schooling. They've followed through with practical support, been in touch with the school.

It was informative... We went round most of the stalls with queries about when he's released. Made us think about things - like where he'll live, spoke to the council about it. Covered practically everything.

Our goals were pretty much on par. Drew pictures and talked - we don't get to do things like that at home, it's fun. Talked to the Citizens Advice Bureau, good knowing you've got help. I've been in touch with Barnardo's since. [Student] got information about funding for his law degree.

Got to speak to agencies, what was next for us, got help we needed to fill in all work sheets. Relaxed atmosphere, most visits not allowed to hold hands. It was nice to spend time together. Helpful and useful.

It was fantastic. We were allowed to ask any questions. Couldn't do anything better, and I'm a teacher! Everything involved everyone. I like that the prisoners were called students.

Most useful aspect [of the course], shows there are agencies there to help on release.

Although only seven of the supporters used the services of the FSW, all who did were impressed with the inclusion of this support and praised the practical assistance given to them by the FSW:

[She was] very useful despite the London to Birmingham distance, she put me in touch with the right people, very helpful.

She was brilliant, she's worked in schools so could really help. She gave me practical help with drafting letters and emails to the school. She sent information on ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] after Peter had been released.

One of the students also commented on the FSW:

I found the family support worker really helpful. She has really helped with my six year old who has been having problems at school; she has sorted everything out for dyspraxia, ADHD and possible mild Asperger. Things have only moved on since she helped us.

Although only two supporters said that they found the 'What Next' day unhelpful, fifteen provided suggestions for how that day might be improved. For example, some reported that the types of agencies they wanted to speak to were not represented; others that the agencies invited were too local to the prison they were serving their sentence, and not their home address; there was a lack of information on what financial support was available post release; there were too many drug agencies represented; a disproportionate number of agencies providing information on children; not enough information on resettlement; and not enough support and information for foreign national prisoners. Below are some of the suggestions put forward by the supporters on how to improve the 'What Next' day:

[The day] needs a greater range of agencies; more agencies about help on release should have been there. Not enough help for single people and housing situation. There was an expectation that Felix would come home to me and my wife.

It'd be good to have stuff about financial help. And there was nothing from other parts of the country, it was all too local. Sometimes they gave a number to call.

I work; Eddy will look after the children when he's out. I'm worried about the costs, I'm on minimum wage. I wanted to know about benefits. They should have those answers. I struggle now. I needed more information.

Should have more people to see. Jamie doesn't drink or smoke so drug services weren't relevant.

The final presentation: 'graduation day'

The final element of the FM programme is a 60 minute presentation to an audience of the students' peers, prison staff, and close family, which often includes: partners/wives, children, parents, siblings and ex-partners who they have children with. It is in this presentation that the students are able to demonstrate what they have learned over the previous 42 lessons and how well they work as a group. The students are assessed throughout the rehearsal process for 'Developing Group and Teamwork Communication Skills'. The presentation is considered an essential element of the programme as it illustrates the group's ability to complete a complex task within a set time limit. Two lessons are dedicated to the preparation of this event. Students agree a new set of ground rules and plan suitable activities for family members of all ages. They are allocated new roles and responsibilities and over the two lessons rehearse a presentation, which includes an adaptation of "The Selfish Giant" by Oscar Wilde and other short compositions (often including poetry and letters by students during the course) which summarise their experience of Family Man.

Graduation day received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, supporters and facilitators. Twenty-six of the students stated that that they were nervous or lacked confidence about taking part in an intensive drama based programme during the pre-programme interview. However, 12 of these men declared themselves up for the challenge of drama despite their nerves and four recognised that it would be beneficial to them. Six of the men who were nervous about the drama, were relieved that they were all in the same boat and three thought it was a worthwhile element of the programme as it would be something their children would enjoy and allowed for additional visits. The 10 men who were confident and happy about the drama element of the programme gave similar responses; with three mentioning that it would 'be a laugh'. Twenty-three men were split between those saying they were confident or nervous. Eleven disclosed that the drama element was 'not a problem' and did not worry them. The rest were willing to take part in the drama, even one student who thought the drama based element was "*trying to take the piss out of criminals*", stating he was willing to do it for his children. The facilitators felt that the drama element of the programme improved students' confidence levels and often made them accept challenges they would not normally confront, as the following quote highlights:

They [students] face their fears and get out of their comfort zones - it's a gradual progression, from wearing wigs and women's clothes, to doing the show, debating, and standing up in front of other people.

Almost all (n=61) of the 66 graduates interviewed agreed with the statement 'I enjoyed the graduation day' When asked what worked well with the programme, over half (n=27/52) of the students who

responded specifically mentioned rehearsing for the graduation day. Below is a range of their views on the final day.

What's nerve wracking is the play but once you got in, everyone did their part, it was a great achievement.

Had the family laughing at the play - a bit of humility, it was refreshing. The visit up here was really nice. Lots of people came including my ex-partner; it was the first time we'd all been together in 10 year.

The performance at the end was the icing on the cake, brought together all our weaknesses and showed us how we had changed.

Doing the play at the end because it was nothing I've ever done before and I was well out of my comfort zone but I believe I can do it again.

The 18 men who mentioned drama as a highlight of the programme had a range of feelings about taking an intensive drama based programme when we interviewed them prior to the start of the programme. This included eight who had been particularly nervous about that part of the programme. Two of four students who said that drama was a negative aspect of the programme had been nervous about it at the beginning, one had been confident and the fourth did not answer the question. Only four men mentioned that the drama element of the programme did not work well. However, this was balanced by another five who were critical of the insufficient time that was allocated to preparing for the play. All of those who were critical about the preparation time were from prison B. Interestingly, some of the facilitators also felt that the programme did not allow sufficient time to prepare for the final graduation day..

The vast majority of supporters who were asked what they thought about the graduation day reported that they had enjoyed it, often highlighting how much their children had enjoyed it too. The day was described repeatedly as 'fun'. Several supporters commented that the students had been embarrassed about performing but this was not viewed as a problem. The following quotes illustrate the positive feedback from the supporters about the graduation day:

It was excellent, really enjoyed it, really proud. Surprised – he pretends to be a hard nut, but got up and did it without being embarrassed. Kids loved it, they still talk about it.

Really good, excellent. Entertaining. Interaction was good; it was a good celebration bringing everyone together. Made the environment happy, made you forget your situation and laugh. You don't see the offence you see the person.

I enjoyed the play, him seeing our daughter walk for the first time, running around, bonding with her. The last visit was wicked.

It was really good fun. I couldn't believe we got a certificate as well, it was really nice to have our commitment recognised.

It was really, really good. Good to see him let himself go. I loved it. I didn't expect it to be so emotional. It was helpful for his son to see him for a longer visit.

It was brilliant - nice to have lunch with him, it was a very relaxed and carefree atmosphere. It really went well. Thoroughly recommend it for other prisoners.

Only three supporters criticised elements of the day. One complained about the food but enjoyed the day overall; another enjoyed the day but reported it had been very upsetting for her children to leave their dad and she had also found the travel costs difficult to cover; the third supporter had not attended the day as she felt that it was unsuitable for her children, who were now adults.

The facilitators were unanimous in their support and praise for the graduation day. Facilitators from all three prisons noted that the role-playing element of the programme improved the students' confidence, placed them in situations they would not normally encounter, challenged them - in a relaxed environment - to express themselves, open up and share their feelings. Below are a range of views expressed by the facilitators about the benefits of the drama element of the programme.

It explores different areas and leads into things that are not part of the course, one item triggers another topic. The men are very honest and open, coming to terms with powerful feelings and emotions.

The interactive nature of the course works very well. It improves their confidence.

The fact they must participate in things works well.... In other courses people can hide but here they can't.

The drama [places] emphasis on group and team work.

All very keen on drama; they are disappointed it doesn't come into it until the end.

IN SUMMARY

- When asked about the programme length, almost two-thirds (n=41) said that it was 'just right;'
- When discussing the letter writing element of the programme, some of the more positive comments came from students who highlighted that they struggled with literacy;

- Of 53 supporters who responded pre-programme, 43 were positive about the letters and only two were negative. The remaining eight gave ambivalent answers;
- Most of the supporters viewed their first 'supporter' session favourably, only six of the 26 were critical of the session;
- Almost three-quarters (n=25) of the supporters thought their student should view seeking employment or further training as an essential goal post release. Twenty supporters stated that their student should focus on improving his relationship with his children and being a better father;
- Most men and supporters considered the 'What Next' day to be useful. Of the 63 men who commented on the day, 52 rated the day as 'useful' or 'very useful';
- Criticisms of the 'What Next' day highlighted by the facilitators included: some of the exercises were patronising; some of the exercises were repetitive; the programme is geared towards men on short term sentences";
- Like the students, the supporters were positive about the opportunity the 'What Next' day gave them to speak to a range of services that could assist the student and his family post release;
- Although only seven of the supporters used the services of the FSW, all of those who did were impressed with the inclusion of this support and praised the practical assistance received; Criticisms of the 'What Next' day included: the agencies invited were too local; there was a lack of information on financial support available post-release; there were too many drug agencies represented; a disproportionate number of agencies providing information on children were invited; not enough information on resettlement; and not enough support and information for foreign national prisoners;
- Graduation day received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, supporters and facilitators;
- Four fifths of the 65 graduates 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'I enjoyed the graduation day' and nine more agreed¹⁶;
- When asked what worked well on the programme, over half (n=27/52) of the students who responded specifically mentioned rehearsing for the graduation day;
- The vast majority of supporters who were asked what they thought about the graduation day reported that they had enjoyed it, often highlighting how much their children had enjoyed it too.

¹⁶ The remainder were unable to answer the question as they were interviewed prior to the graduation day.

CHAPTER 4: THE FAMILY MAN PROGRAMME: VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS OF 'WHAT WORKED'

In this chapter we examine - from the perspective of students, supporters and facilitators - which elements of the FM programme worked well and which elements the students were less enthusiastic about and why. We examine the impact the FM programme has had on the students' confidence and self-esteem and on the relationships between the student, his family, children and supporter. Finally, we consider the impact of the FM programme post-release from prison. We also highlight what improvements FM participants and facilitators would like incorporated into future programmes.

Is the programme popular?

The programme was extremely popular with nearly all our interviewees; only two of 66 students expressed dissatisfaction with the overall programme and one person was undecided. Both individuals who were unhappy, commented that the tutors were not up to the job; one adding that the facilitators taught the programme as if they were reading from a script¹⁷ and appeared largely unprepared. Unsurprisingly, both of the dissatisfied students were non-completers; neither was supported by a partner or wife and both had a considerable length of time left to serve.

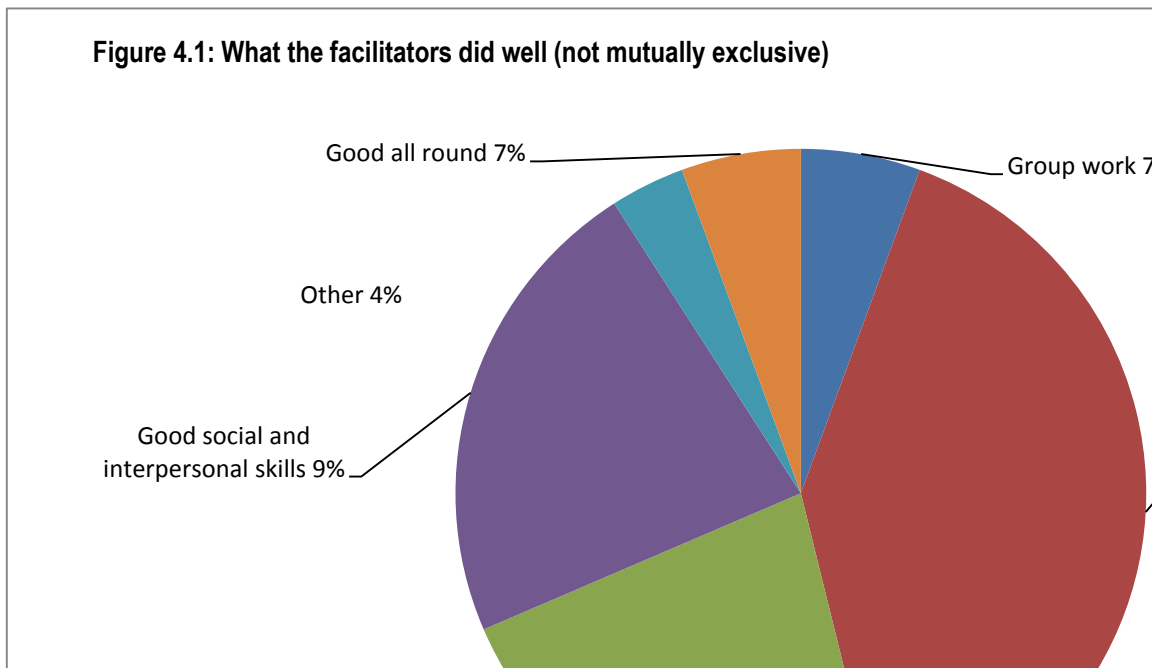
The facilitators

Teachers are widely acknowledged as one of the most important elements of any successful educational or vocational course, whether it is delivered in a university, pupil referral unit or prison setting. Educationalists who are engaged with their subject matter and are engaging to listen to are indispensable. It is not surprising that as adults we remember the teachers who inspired us and those who left us bored. With this in mind, we asked respondents about the programme facilitator, what they thought the facilitators did well and what they could improve upon.

Students were very positive about the facilitators and reported enjoying the variety of teaching methods that were employed. More than half (n=33) of the 64 respondents, stated that the facilitators had adopted a relaxed approach when teaching and were engaging. More specifically, 17 men commented that the delivery of the lessons and the overall aims of the programme were clear, concise and well communicated. Just over a third of the men reported that the facilitators were easy to approach when

¹⁷ The two dissatisfied students both took the first FM course running at this particular prison. None of the facilitators had any prior experience of facilitating a FM course and all said that they felt unprepared.

seeking help and advice, and were good at providing solutions and practical guidance to any problems they were presented with. Facilitators were frequently described as hard working and appeared to inspire the students to do well. Over half the students at prison B, just over a third at prison A and a quarter at prison C expressed this view. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the students' thoughts on what the facilitators did well¹⁸.



The following quotes illustrate the students' views of the facilitators:

They were brilliant, helped us out when we were stuck, supported us, kept us going. I couldn't fault them.

They interacted with us on a friendly level but also made sure it [the course] went smoothly and everyone understood the material.

Funny, warming and understanding. They treated us like normal people. We got to express ourselves. We could escape from actually being in prison. Really good, 100%.

I think they explained what was required of us very well and maintained discipline, they also treated us fairly and with respect.

They helped me, encouraged me through the course, they gave me confidence. Not many people have ever done that for me.

¹⁸ Students were able to provide more than one answer, in total 122 responses were received.

They were experienced and spoke at our level; you could tell they wanted the best for you and your family by the way they took the course.

All of the students were asked what improvements the facilitators should introduce and what changes they should make to the programme. More than half of the respondents said they could not think of anything they would change, that everything was 'great' and that 'nothing should be changed'. Suggestions made included: the facilitators should work off-script a little more (n=6); there should be provision of snacks (n=3); the facilitators should prepare better (n=3); there should be more information at the start of the programme (n=2); the course should be less repetitive (n=2). The following quotes highlight some of these criticisms:

The start of it was shit. I thought about leaving during the first fortnight. Don't think it was well planned for us - we're lifers.

The food was cold at both the visits, there weren't enough visits from your family member. The partner should be more involved in the course.

I found it quite repetitive; it dragged on for far too long. Not enough time to prepare for the play at the end. Maybe re-focus the course - put play rehearsals in the middle, paperwork at the end.

Punctuation/grammar, being told to learn it and they don't even know it, they often made mistakes. Asked for things they were doing wrong to be pointed out but then when you do you get told off. They seemed very poorly prepared, just reading from a piece of paper. Any one of us could have "facilitated" it.

The impact of the programme on student confidence and self-esteem

Although there is no specific mention within the FM operating guidelines that improving an individual's confidence and self-esteem is an aim of the programme, during the post-programme interviews a number of students discussed the positive impact the programme had made on their confidence and self-esteem. A number of supporters also mentioned this. Just over a third (n=24) of students stated that the programme had improved their self-esteem and/or their confidence. For some the programme had improved the perception they held of themselves as learners and, for others they believed the programme had given them the confidence to read and play with their children. Other students discussed how the programme had improved their self-esteem and equipped them with the necessary tools to communicate with their family in a more meaningful way. The quotes below illustrate the various ways in which the men expressed how their confidence had been improved after participating on the programme.

The reading and writing worked well, reading out loud I now have confidence with that; I was pushed at that which was good. The play at the end was good. I can now read the kids a bedtime story, as I now have the confidence and not to be so selfish. I'm now thinking of them. The whole thing was superb. I got a great deal out of it on so many levels. I like the simplicity, going back to basics, how to write a letter, just being able to communicate. Had the family laughing at the play; it was a bit of humility, it was refreshing... I got voted the most helpful student, which built my self-esteem. It's encouraged me to do voluntary work.

I lacked confidence but took part in the play, it really built my confidence. Drama's good. If I get in a problem in a few years I can use those skills.

Even those individuals, who thought they had learned nothing from the programme, reported that their confidence levels had improved, as the following extract illustrates:

Nothing worked well; I didn't like it [the course] at all. However, the course did give me some confidence with myself. They [the facilitators] also gave me confidence to tell my son I'm in jail, not the offence though.

From the post-programme supporter questionnaire, 10 stated that they had seen an improvement in their student's self-esteem or overall confidence:

[I was] surprised at how staff cared about people, helped him to gain confidence, always had view prisoners were looked down on. (Supporter discussing the 'What Next' day)

It's made him reflect on our life together and what it means. I think he appreciates me more. His confidence has improved. (Supporter discussing the impact of the FM programme)

Course has made him realise people around him care. Gained confidence, wouldn't usually stand up in front of people (Supporter discussing the impact of the FM programme)

Like both the students and their supporters the facilitators also believed that one of the strengths of the programme was the positive impact it had on the students' confidence.

The impact of the programme on family relationships

One of the most important elements of the programme is to equip students with the necessary skills to improve their family relationships. As part of the evaluation we asked students and supporters if there had been any discernible change in their relationships after completing the programme. Of the 63 men who responded, only two believed there had been no change in their relationship. Although, in a previous question, both had commented that the programme had increased their awareness of family issues, had helped them focus on family life, and that their relationship with their supporter had

improved, perhaps suggesting the programme had more of an impact than they realised. . The large majority reported positive changes in attitude such as a closer relationship and better communication. When we asked students in what way they thought the programme had helped them, over half (n=36) of the men stated that it had improved their awareness of family issues.

It has given me a better understanding of my family's needs and how they must be feeling.

Thinking before acting, putting others first, I knew what I wasn't doing wasn't right - didn't know it was affecting them this much...

FM has made me realise how much family means to me. It's, increased my respect for what my wife's dealing with.

Twenty-four students also claimed to have noticed an improvement in the relationship with their families in general and five reported that they felt closer to their partner or wife. Other positive outcomes reported by the students included: better teamwork, improved communication between themselves and their partner and an increased awareness about thinking before acting when confronted with stressful situations. The following quotes illustrate the views from supporters about how the FM programme has changed the relationship between the students and their children:

He speaks to them with a lot less anger. He's more approachable for them. They communicate a lot more and at a deeper level.

He's just a lot more willing to listen, rather than tell.

When you're with them [children] 24/7 you take them for granted, you don't miss them. Now he's very involved, asking about what they're up to. Our daughter does ballet; he shows an interest in everything, he helps with homework over the phone.

He makes more of an effort. He has a closer relationship [with children] now, he communicates more, he also sent Christmas presents.

Most of the facilitators mentioned the perceived improvement between the student and his family, post FM programme, noting in particular that students professed to have a greater awareness of the impact their offending on their family:

They see their family having to cope with what they've done.

The impact of the FM programme on the relationship between students and their supporter

For most students on the programme, their being imprisoned had a profound effect on their supporter. Nearly all of the supporters had to re-arrange their family finances, and whilst coping with new financial situations, many had sole responsibility for their children, often juggling childcare arrangements with a full or part time job. These competing priorities had to be arranged around prison visits. .

Twenty-two men said that the communication between themselves and their partner had improved since the programme and the same number thought it had strengthened their relationship. Almost three-fifths of the students in prison B believed that the programme had given them a better understanding of the difficulties their supporter experienced on a day to day basis. A number of students in prison A said that after completing the programme they had started to appreciate and value their supporter more. Finally, 10 men believed the programme had increased their awareness of the consequences of their actions and sharpened their focus on their responsibilities as a 'family man'.

Whilst most of the supporter interviewees were wives and partners, parents, siblings, prisoners' adult children and ex-partners were also represented. As such, it was interesting to note that nearly all the post-programme supporters tended to share the same view of the programme as the students, reporting that the FM programme had improved their relationship with their student and the student's attitude towards them had matured. Overall supporters believed that the programme had been a positive experience for their student. They had noticed a number of subtle changes in their student's behaviour, such as: paying more attention to their children; being more considerate and patient; writing to their children more; being more playful with their children during prison visits and helping with homework over the phone. All of which, the supporters attributed to the student successfully completing the programme. Almost every respondent identified one or more ways in which their student had changed for the better. These included their student having a more positive outlook towards life and being more caring (11) and improvement to confidence and self-esteem (7).

Six supporters reported that their student had spoken to them about the need to change. Some also reported that their student was consciously trying to think before taking any hasty action, a change from their pre-programme days. Four supporters felt their partner appreciated more what they did for them on the outside and the difficulties they experienced. Three supporters noted that their partners were more family-oriented and keener to begin planning their future together and had started to set some goals. . Two partners, both at prison A, commented that their men had finally begun to realise "what it's like for us". Interestingly, the comments and observations made by the supporters echo McGuire's 2009

report for Safe Ground in which he states that “individual insight and a re-evaluation of attitudes and beliefs concerning families is one of the key elements in affecting change” (McGuire, 2009).

The impact of the programme on supporters

The FM programme demands considerable commitment from supporters. For example, here is an expectation that the supporters will attend three full days at the prison and this often entails supporters having to arrange additional childcare and/or take annual leave from work¹⁹. However, supporters too believed they benefitted from the FM programme.

In the pre-programme interview 49 of the 58 supporters said they had a ‘positive’ or ‘very positive’ relationship with their student. By the end of the programme all but two supporters (32 out of 34) described their relationship with the students as ‘positive’, with 16 stating it was ‘very positive’. Two supporters who had initially described their relationship as ‘neither negative nor positive’ subsequently changed their response in the post-questionnaire to ‘positive’. Seven supporters changed from ‘positive’ to ‘very positive’ and one, the ex-partner of a student in prison C, changed from ‘very negative’ to ‘very positive’. Four had downgraded their relationship from ‘very positive’ to ‘positive’ and two from ‘very positive’ to ‘neither’. Almost two-thirds (n=17) of the supporters continued to make regular or very regular visits after the programme had finished, and 28 maintained regular contact either by telephone or letter-writing.

We wanted to gain an understanding of any perceived changes between students, their supporter and their children. Twenty-four supporters discussed this with us after the programme had finished. Of these 12 believed the relationship between the student and his children had improved and 12 thought it had remained the same, (nine had previously rated the relationship as very positive, two as positive and 1 had not responded to the question). Eight supporters thought the student was more loving towards his children and was more involved in their lives. Five supporters believed the student was communicating more effectively and listened to his children more. Four supporters also thought that the relationship between the student and his children was stronger. Some supporters elaborated, stating that the student appeared to be more interested in children’s homework and hobbies; previously these things would have gone unnoticed or unmentioned. All but two of the 24 supporters described the relationship

¹⁹ Prior to the start of the course just under three quarters of the sample (n=40) were in full or part time work, described themselves as full-time mothers, or were students. Of the 29 who completed the post-course questionnaire, 20 were working or caring for children full time.

the men had with their children as 'good' or 'very good', only one supporter stated that the relationship was 'neither good nor bad'.

When we asked the supporters what they had gained from the programme, the most common responses - given by almost a quarter of supporters - were "spending more time with the student", "it brought us closer together" and "we developed a better understanding of each other". One of the benefits of the FM programme is that it allows families to spend more time with prisoners and have longer visiting hours than they would ordinarily. From our interviews it was clear that this particular perk was very much appreciated, as highlighted by the supporter below:

I got the visits; I spent time with my husband. To see inside the prison, the workshop, to see what he does and where he is.

Seven supporters did not think that they had got anything or benefitted from the programme. In part this was due to their conviction that the programme had been designed purely for the students. Of the seven, six were partners or wives and one was an ex-partner and mother of the student's children. However, all thought highly of the programme and felt their partners had benefitted from it and six of the seven said they would recommend the programme to other prisoners and their partners or families. Other benefits mentioned by supporters included: improved communication with their student; an insight into how prisons operate; and a sense that planning for the future was now possible. The quotes below highlight the supporters' views the benefits of FM:

The course made me realise that Vince made a wrong choice, he made a mistake, there's room for improvement; before I was so angry. He can be a good family man again.

It was positive for the whole family and children. Realising the mistakes, planning for the future, getting the help we need.

I saw him a bit more, saw what he was learning, I learned from the course and I think it's improved our relationship.

It gave me a huge insight into what being in prison means. It's a lot easier than I thought it was going to be, it was like a bloody holiday camp. I enjoyed the course, it made me realise a lot of things about Adam, like he's just not as strong emotionally as me. The course has improved our family relationship, I appreciate him as an individual, there are less arguments now, there's a better understanding between the two of us.

We were both really pleased to be involved. We communicate better. It's changed both our perspectives and Harvey's attitude.

I think I did get stuff out of it. Before I said nothing and let him carry on. It's nice to have his support and to tell him things have to change, to talk about my problems. It was nice he could sit and understand what I'm saying. It was a chance to explain - I wasn't preaching or nagging, but supporting him.

The Family Man programme post-release

We asked the supporters what elements of the programme they thought the men would try to incorporate into their lives once released. The most common response, from a third of interviewees (n=9), was that they thought the men would perhaps think before acting. Seven hoped that, as a result of the programme, the students would have an improved awareness of family issues and appreciate a little more the impact their sentence has on those left behind. Five supporters thought that the FM programme had strengthened family communication and wanted this to continue. A small number of women (n=5) hoped that the new found maturity the programme appeared to bring out in their students would last post-release. A number of women felt that the programme had helped their student to be more open with them and share their feelings – another response that many supporters wanted to last beyond the end of the programme. A number also highlighted the certified practical skills the programme had equipped the students with, which they hoped would assist them once released. Only three of the 27 respondents were unable to identify any benefits the programme may have on life after prison. Interestingly, these three reported no personal benefit from the programme. Rather encouragingly, all but one (n=29) of the post-programme supporters said that they would 'strongly recommend' the programme to other prisoners and their partners or family members.

Facilitators also commented on the possible benefits of the programme post release stating that in their view the men who take the programme become "more socially acceptable" and "responsible adults and citizens". In general the facilitators believed that those who completed the programme improved their family relationships post release and often stood a better chance of employment post prison. Overall the facilitators were overwhelmingly supportive of the programme, believing it to be worthwhile and having the potential to get men to think about their offending behaviour and its wider impact.

In Summary

- The programme was overwhelmingly popular with nearly all the interviewees; 63 of the 66 students, who completed a post-programme questionnaire highlighted aspects of the programme they thought had worked particularly well;
- Students were particularly positive about the facilitators and reported that they enjoyed the variety of teaching methods that were employed;

- Over half of the 64 respondents stated that the facilitators had adopted a relaxed approach when teaching and were engaging. More specifically, 17 men commented that the delivery of lessons and the overall aims of the programme were clear, concise and well communicated;
- Just over a third of the men reported that the facilitators were easy to approach when seeking help and advice;
- A number of supporters mentioned the positive impact of the programme on their student's confidence;
- For some the programme had improved the perception they held of themselves as learners; others believed the programme had given them the confidence to read and play with their children;
- Of the 63 men who responded, only two believed there had been no change in their relationship (with their supporter) following the programme;
- Over half of the men commented that the programme had improved their awareness of family issues;
- Twenty-four students claimed they had noticed a general improvement in their family relationships and five reported that they felt closer to their partner or wife;
- Almost every supporter identified one or more ways in which their student had changed for the better;
- Twenty-four supporters discussed the relationship between their student and his/their children upon completion of the Family Man programme with all but two describing this relationship as 'good' or 'very good';
- A third of the post-supporter interviewees believed that the programme had highlighted to their student the importance of thinking before acting;
- Seven supporters hoped that, as a result of the programme, the students would have an improved awareness of family issues and appreciate a little more the impact their sentence had on those left behind;
- Facilitators were overwhelmingly supportive of the programme, believing it to worthwhile and having the potential to assist men to think about their offending behaviour and its wider impact.

CHAPTER 5: THE MEASURED IMPACT OF THE FAMILY MAN PROGRAMME

The process of giving up offending – desistance - is a complex one and is only just starting to receive detailed examination by criminologists. Our review of the literature suggests that social capital is an important element in protecting individuals from reoffending and that strong bonds with close family members tend to promote the desistance process by increasing an individual’s “stock of social capital”.

There is, therefore, an evidence base to suggest that close family bonds and family support can be an important element in promoting desistance. However, family support – and indeed social capital – is only one element in the desistance journey. Whilst it may be a critical element for many offenders, for others, gaining employment, forging new relationships and disassociating with criminally active friends are of greater significance in the desistance journey.

There is an additional challenge when measuring the impact of FM. Owing to its extensive nature, the FM programme is mainly delivered to offenders who are serving considerable periods of imprisonment – 59% of the FM graduates in the Justice Data Lab study had been sentenced to terms of imprisonment between 12 months to 4 years, and a further 28% to longer sentences. To help preserve and build family bonds, it is obviously important that prisoners are offered a place on the programme early in their sentence. However, this inevitably means that many students receive the intervention several years before their release, making the evaluation of the impact of the programme considerably more difficult to measure.

All these factors came to light in ICPR’s recent rapid evidence assessment (REA) of the intermediate outcomes of family and intimate relationship interventions which was undertaken in partnership with New Philanthropy Capital for the National Offender Management Service²⁰. This REA is the first stage in a wider project to develop a framework for outcome measurement which can be adopted by organisations like Safe Ground who deliver family interventions to offenders. The REA found that:

- The quality of evidence in evaluations of family interventions for offenders was “very limited”.
- A wide range of intermediate outcomes were identified, including improved communication and problem-solving skills and reduced levels of substance misuse. These skills may be useful for assisting resettlement on release from prison.

²⁰ Hunter, G. et al. (2013) Intermediate outcomes of family and intimate relationship interventions: rapid evidence assessment. NOMS Analytical Summary

- There was some evidence that family interventions could help towards reducing reoffending – but this evidence was mainly in relation to family visits and home leave.

It is clear that the nature of family interventions with offenders presents researchers, seeking to measure their impact on reoffending, with significant challenges. Given the complexity of the process of desistance, a comprehensive longitudinal study with a sizeable cohort (to attempt to control for the many variables and disentangle the impact of the FM programme) would need to be assembled.

In the absence of such a study, the Justice Data Lab (JDL) initiative and the rapid evidence assessment do provide us with an opportunity to explore both reoffending and intermediate outcomes. Importantly, the JDL allows us to compare FM graduates against a matched control group in addition to benchmarking the performance of the Family Man programme against other family interventions. The cost benefit analysis, based on the reconviction data, also enables Safe Ground to put the case to commissioning bodies that FM contributes to desistance and is associated with reduced reoffending in addition to being cost efficient.

Reoffending

Safe Ground provided information on 333 offenders who completed the FM programme to the JDL. The JDL successfully matched 291 of these 333 offenders to the Police National computer, a match rate of 87%. The main reason for not matching the remaining 13% was that Safe Ground was unable to provide dates of birth (6.9%) or first names (0.6%) for some of the students.

Eighty-three students were eligible to have their reoffending measured; the remainder were ineligible due to still serving their sentence or because they were released post-2011. It was disappointing, given the scale of the FM programme and the fact that it has been running for 11 years, to have such a small cohort for reoffending analysis. The size of the sample had a substantial impact on the statistical reliability of the findings, as we shall see. Despite the limitations of these data, the fact that both the reoffending and cost benefit analyses are based on official MoJ data, supports the credibility of the conclusions.

The JDL matched all 83 students to offenders with similar (static) characteristics but who did not attend the Family Man programme.

The one year proven reoffending rate for the 83 offenders on the FM programme was 39% which compared to 47% for the matched control group of similar offenders. The official JD L report presented the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the reoffending rates of both groups (the range in which one can be 95% sure that the true reoffending rate for the groups lie). The MoJ stated that the true

difference in reoffending between two groups was between +3 and -19 percentage points. However, because this difference crossed zero, the MoJ stated that it could not draw a firm conclusion about its impact.

It is likely that the JDL report presents a lower, but still very high, level of confidence and we therefore feel that it is appropriate to base our cost benefit analysis on this study. The cost benefit analysis set out below is based on the Data Lab report and should be noted to have a 90% confidence level.

Cost Benefit Analysis

This cost benefit analysis has considered only the issue of reoffending – in essence whether the FM programme saves more money in terms of reoffending prevented, than it costs to actually run the programme. There is, of course, a wide range of potential cost savings associated with the FM programme. These include:

- Improved well-being for prisoners' children – there is considerable public expenditure on children who are excluded from school or who need interventions from Children's Services.
- Families whose imprisoned father is still committed to their welfare are less likely to be made homeless, again preventing significant costs associated with rehousing "troubled families".

However, we have not included these issues in our Costs Benefit Analysis as this would require a much larger study tracking family outcomes in addition to student reoffending rates.

The remainder of this chapter provides a detailed account of how we calculated the cost benefits of FM in terms of the probable reduced reoffending rate of students. We start by looking at the costs of the programme before looking at likely reconviction rates based on the JDL analysis.

Costs

We used data relating to the financial year 2009/10 to calculate the costs of the FM programme. This year was selected because the financial records were complete and it was within the same timeframe for the cohort of offenders considered by the JDL reoffending analysis.

Central Costs

Twenty two FM programmes were run in 2009/10 in 12 different prison establishments. 351 students started an FM programme and 269 completed one.

Both the Family Man and Fathers Inside programmes for this year were supported by a grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families amounting to £120,000. Twenty two Family Man and 19

Fathers Inside programmes were run in 2009/10. We have therefore split the total budget proportionately, allocating 53.7% (22/41 total programmes) of the funding to Family Man.

This budget was underspent by £10,870 in 2009/10 leaving a residual total of £109,130, of which the 53.7% FM proportion is £58,603.

Local Costs

The principal costs of delivering each programme locally are the staff costs. Each programme runs for 36 days and is facilitated by two tutors. The programme runs for 6 hours per day, but costs are calculated on a full 7.5 hour day to allow time for preparation and de-brief. Although different staff (prison officers, education staff and drug workers) deliver the programme in different institutions, in the majority (15 out of 18) prisons, the programmes are delivered by education staff. The hourly cost for prison education staff involved in delivering FM programmes in 2013 was an average of £23.68 per hour. This figure has not been adjusted since Average Weekly Earnings data reveals that public sector wage levels show a net growth of less than 0.5% over the last three year period. Therefore the average staff cost per hour is £12,787 per course ($£23.68 \times 7.5 \text{ hours} \times 72 \text{ days}$)

In addition, a FSW provides an input to families for an average of 25 days per programme, with an average daily cost of £123 which amounts to £3,075 per programme. In addition the Family Day buffet costs £85 per programme. The total local cost per programme is £15,947 ($£12,787 + £3,075 + £85$). The total local cost of running 22 programmes was £350,834 ($£15,947 \times 22$). There is a final cost of £100 for accredited qualifications for every student who completes the programme which gives an additional cost of £26,900.

Total cost

The overall cost of the FM programme in 2010 was calculated as the sum of the national running costs, the local FM programmes delivered to students and support to families, and the cost of accredited qualifications which amounts to: £436,337 ($£19,833.50 \text{ per programme}$)

Reoffending

Two hundred and sixty nine students completed a FM programme in 2010. We can have a high level of confidence that 105 of this group reoffended against a predicted 126 (based on the matched cohort). It is reasonable therefore to assume that 21 fewer prisoners would have reoffended at least once – using a binary measure of re-offending.

The MoJ recently issued a detailed statistical modelling²¹ of the likely reoffending rates of offenders to inform the proposed changes to the probation system under its Transforming Rehabilitation project. The statistical tables issued with this report showed that the average number of reoffences for all offenders released from prison or supervised in the community in 2010 was 4.0. It is reasonable therefore, to assume that, had these 21 released prisoners reoffended, they would have committed a total of 84 offences.

Cost-benefit analysis

In calculating the cost of these prevented offences, the official figures developed by the Home Office in their 2000²² and 2005²³ reports and updated in 2011²⁴ have been used.

The Home Office methodology estimates the unit costs of a range of crime types using three elements:

1. Costs incurred in anticipation of crime (such as security expenditure)
2. Costs incurred as a consequence of crime (such as property stolen and emotional or physical impacts)
3. Costs incurred in response to crime (costs to the criminal justice system).

The JDL analysis of the FM reoffending data provides a breakdown of the characteristics of offenders in the FM and matched control group, including their index offence. Figure 5.1 shows the breakdown of these offences.

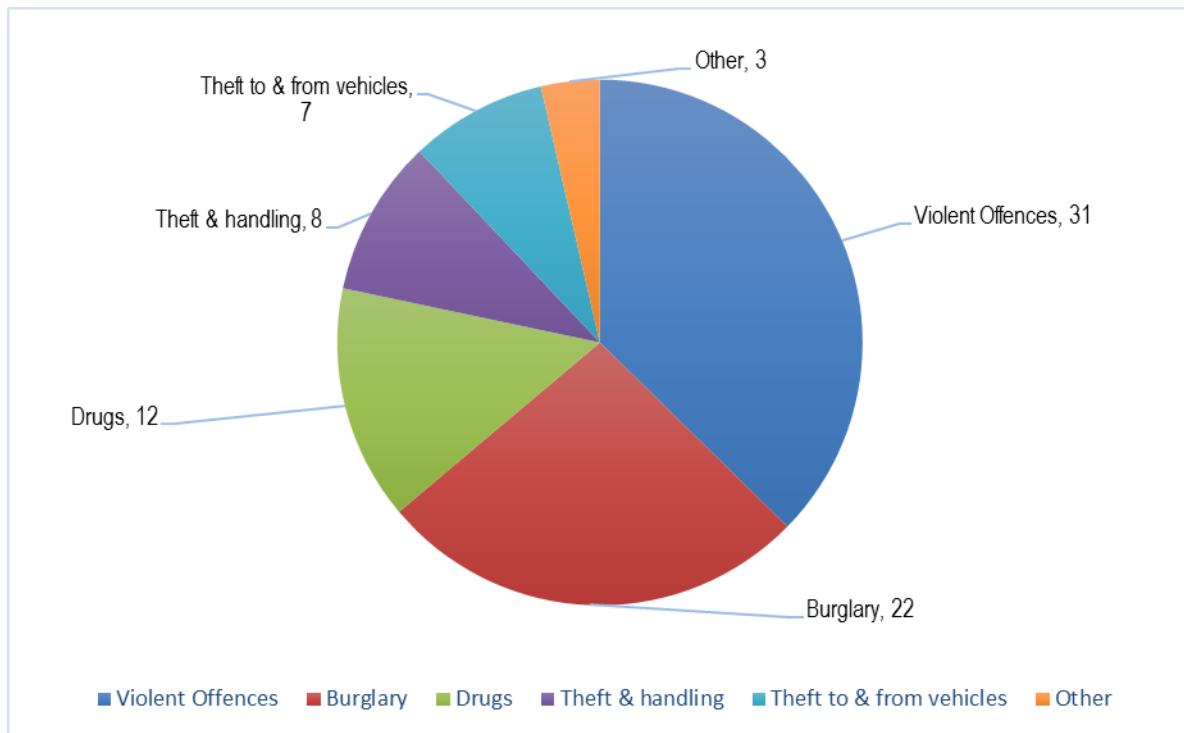
²¹ Ministry of Justice (2013) Modelled management information on offender cohorts and re-offending in the 21 planned Transforming Rehabilitation Programme Contract Package Areas. Online: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/rehab-prog/competition/tr-prog-cpa-mi.pdf> (Date of publication 11 October 2013).

²² Brand, S. & Price, R. (2000) The economic and social costs of crime. London: Home Office HORS 217. This study presented the first estimates of the cost of crime in England and Wales.

²³ Home Office (2005). The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/4. Home Office Online Report 30/05, this study presented the results of the first set of updates to the original figures.

²⁴ Home Office (2011) Revisions made to the multipliers and unit costs of crime used in the Integrated Offender Management value for money toolkit.

Figure 5.1 Index Offence of Family Man completers and matched control group



NB: Violent offences include robbery.

The unit costs of these five main categories according to the Home Office 2011 figures are:

Violence ²⁵	£11,524
Burglary ²⁶	£ 4,267
Drugs	No cost available. Home Office figures not available.
Theft	£763
Theft to & from vehicle ²⁷	£2207

These costs can then be apportioned to the relevant proportion of index offences of the JDL cohorts as set out in Table 5.1 below:

²⁵ Calculated from the average cost of the four categories of violence: serious wounding, other wounding, common assault and robbery.

²⁶ Calculated as an average of the offences of “burglary in a dwelling” and “burglary not in a dwelling”

²⁷ Calculated as average of three categories of “theft of vehicle”, “theft from vehicle”, and “attempted vehicle theft”.

Table 5.1: Cost of “prevented crimes” by offence

Offence	Number	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Violence	31	£11,524	£358,166
Burglary	23	£ 4,267	£96,776
Theft	8	£763	£6,409
Theft of/from Mv	7	£2207	£14,831
Total	66		£476,182

Using this method, we have calculated that 82% of “prevented” offences would have cost £476,182. We were unable to calculate the costs of drug and “other” offences. If we assume the same average cost for the missing 18% of offences, we can calculate that the cost of the total 84 “prevented” offences would be: £580,709.

Conclusion

Using this methodology, we can calculate that the FM programme in 2010 cost £436,337 and generated £580,709 in savings from prevented offending using official MoJ figures for the costs of crime - a surplus of £144,372. In conclusion, for every £1 invested in Family Man a return of £1.33 will be generated.

CHAPTER 6: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Too many prisoners spend too long in their cells with nothing constructive to do, and when they are in classes or work, these are often of insufficient quality. Equipping prisoners with the skills, habits and attitudes they need to get and hold down a job is an essential part of the rehabilitation process”. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Annual Report 2013)

This evaluation assessed the perceived effectiveness and impact of the Family Man programme run by Safe Ground in three prisons in England and Wales. The evaluation aimed to assess changes in students’ and supporters’ perceptions of their family relationships, themselves and the educational opportunities available to them. In addition the evaluation looked at the cost-effectiveness of the programme and the impact of the programme on measured reoffending rates.

We have shown that the Family Man programme was well-received and popular with the students and supporters who took part in it and valued by the facilitators who ran it. We also found that the programme was viewed by students as challenging but also fun and rewarding. It is a programme that appeals to learners of all abilities and is one that actively seeks to involve a prisoner’s family in addition to statutory and voluntary agencies from outside the prison to assist with the rehabilitation process. Involving close family members in the rehabilitation process has been recognised by both the present Coalition government and the previous Labour administration as integral to an individual’s desistance from crime. It has also been recognised that this vital element is often missing from the rehabilitation process. In essence one of the programme’s core aims is to equip prisoners with the skills, habits and attitudes they need to get and hold down a job.

In 2012-13 public sector prisons had to find savings of around £80 million, much of this was achieved by “reconfiguring the prison estate by closing some smaller, older prisons and increasing the size and number of very large establishments” (HMIP, Annual Report 2013 p.7). Whilst reducing reoffending is a government objective, realising this aim - at the coalface - is a challenge. Whilst the most recent HMIP report concluded that educational take-up and attainment was poor in many prisons and viewed the availability of vocational courses in many secure establishments as inadequate, we shall argue in this chapter that it is important that the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Education, the Skills Funding Agency and senior prison managers continue to support the work of Safe Ground and actively encourage prisoners to apply for a place on one of the FM programmes. We discuss findings under three headings:

- Programme content
- The 'What Next' day
- Monitoring 'what works' effectively

First, however, we shall summarise the key findings.

Key findings

- Almost two-thirds of students had the programme recommended to them by another prisoner;
- Just over half the student sample signed up to the programme to 'improve themselves and/or their family relationships';
- Twenty-two students reported that since being incarcerated contact with their children was 'never', 'rare' or 'infrequent';
- Twenty-seven students said they wanted the programme to help them to see things from the perspective of their family. A further 15 wanted the programme to provide them with the tools to improve their family relationships
- Almost three-quarters (n=25) of the supporters thought their student should view seeking employment or further training as an essential goal post release. Twenty supporters stated that their student should focus on improving his relationship with his children and being a better father
- Graduation day received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, supporters and facilitators
- The programme was overwhelmingly popular with nearly all the interviewees, only two of the 66 students expressed dissatisfaction with the overall programme and one person was undecided
- Students were particularly positive about the facilitators and reported that they enjoyed the variety of teaching methods that were employed
- A number of supporters mentioned the positive impact of the programme on their student's confidence. Just over a third of students stated that the programme had improved their self-esteem and/or their confidence
- Over half of the men commented that the programme had improved their awareness of family issues
- Overall the supporters believed that the programme had been a positive experience for the students
- Almost every supporter identified one or more ways in which they thought their student had changed for the better

- A Ministry of Justice Data Lab study suggested that Family Man programme has a positive impact on reducing reoffending by between 3 and 19 percentage points
- The Family Man programme is cost efficient, generating £1.33 in savings for every £1 invested in the programme

Programme content and length

Designing a programme that meets the needs of any group of learners is a complex task. The Family Man programme has been designed to attract learners of all abilities and to provide a comprehensive overview of family dynamics, preparing for release, further educational or training opportunities and understanding what triggers offending. It is clear from our interviews that Safe Ground's programmes appeal to a diverse student population. Given the success of the programme and the skill of many of the facilitators, there is undoubtedly scope to build-in a degree of flexibility that will allow the programme to meet the needs of a wider range of students, in particular students serving life sentences or long term sentences and students who have either grown up or no children.

With two facilitators there is scope to have a core group of students and a break-out group, this group (the break-out group) could comprise of men at the beginning or mid-way through a life or long-term sentence, men with no children or grown up children and foreign national prisoners. The break-out group could replace some of the core lessons with lessons that are more relevant to their needs. The idea should be piloted to see if it is workable and if it appeals to both prisoners and facilitators

Flexibility also needs to be built into the programme, especially in prisons where there is a lack of space. Students at prison B spent 12 weeks on the programme (due to lack of space only morning sessions were available). To hold the attention of men for this length of time proved difficult. Where this is the case, Safe Ground may want to look at reducing the number of lessons. One of the observations made by a few students was the repetitiveness of some of the lessons. It would appear, therefore, that there is scope to reduce the number of lessons by eliminating repetitiveness. To appeal to a more diverse group of students, Safe Ground may want to consider:

- Providing greater flexibility in programme content: For life sentence/long-term prisoners this might involve setting goals around constructive use of the rest of their time in prison, rather than focusing on imminent release.

- Examining the literacy levels of each cohort of students to determine whether some lessons need to be adapted. Although a certain level of literacy is required to take part in the course, some students found the classes too simplistic and repetitive (lifers/long term prisoners who had completed a number of literacy courses prior to applying to be part of the FM programme). It may be beneficial to vary the level of literacy exercises for some students on the programme.
- Examining the range of relationships within each cohort. Given that Family Man positions itself as a family relationships programme, rather than specifically a parenting programme, it may be beneficial to focus less on parenting (for the break-out group). Although parenting is a high priority for those with young children, the programme would be more inclusive if it included a greater variety of relationships.
- The situation of foreign national prisoners. It is probably more important to be sensitive to the needs of an individual rather than adapt the programme. Facilitators may, however, find it useful if Safe Ground is able to provide them with information about voluntary or statutory agencies that can assist foreign national students after their sentence, for example if a student has concerns about being deported, specific information regarding deportation at the 'What Next' Day is likely to be welcomed. The feasibility of supporter visits and the strain it might place them under should also be considered.

In addition to building in flexibility to the programme, there is also scope to offer cell-based refresher courses. The FM programme attracts men serving long sentences; however, it is difficult to measure the impact of the programme for those individuals who complete the programme in year four of a fifteen year sentence. Refresher programmes will not only consolidate the work learnt in the full-length programme prior to an imminent release but will also be invaluable for any future Safe Ground re-offending studies. If Safe Ground do decide to introduce a refresher programme, it will be important to record whether students complete both components of the FM programme (the seven week programme and the refresher programme). Recording this information will enable Safe Ground to submit a separate cohort of students who have completed a refresher programme to the JDL to explore the potential impact of this new development.

The 'What Next' day

The 'What Next' day was generally well received and is a positive and vital contribution to assisting with the desistance and rehabilitation process post release. Of the 63 men who commented on the day, 52 rated the day as 'useful' or 'very useful'. Students and supporters appreciated the input from the

external agencies and the opportunity to spend time with their supporter. Criticisms levelled against this element of the programme focused mainly on the level of relevance of some of the external agencies invited, some of the activities and exercise being too simplistic, and some of the session being patronising. It would appear that there is scope for this element of the programme to be re-focused. The aim of the day needs to be about meeting the identified needs of each new cohort of students. For example: in cohorts where there are no men with substance misuse issues, Drug and Alcohol Teams/services should not be present. Safe Ground should work with the facilitators to identify suitable statutory and voluntary groups to attend each *individual* 'What Next' day and help the facilitators to secure buy-in from these agencies.

The 'What Next' day could also provide Safe Ground and the facilitators with an opportunity to include a talk by a FM graduate who has been released from prison and has successfully secured a training scheme or paid/voluntary work. If such an element was included it would enable students to see what can be achieved post release.

Monitoring 'what works' effectively:

Multi-method evaluations are likely to be the best approach to capturing and measuring the effectiveness of a programme which aims to:

- engage with hard-to-reach prisoner groups
- strengthen a prisoner's bond to his or her family and children
- improve his/her self-esteem; and
- change his/her view about participating in education and training opportunities

Reoffending studies need to be complemented with in-depth qualitative studies. Understanding what motivates an individual to desist from offending is particularly important if programmes designed and run by Safe Ground are to continue to meet the needs of their client group. Easy to implement monitoring tools and satisfaction surveys that aim to capture the views and opinions of students and supporters should be put in place to provide up-to-date information to Safe Ground on the usefulness of programmes being run.

Reoffending studies are, however, an essential component when measuring a programme's effectiveness and impact. To enable Safe Ground to benefit from any future Justice Data Lab submissions, standardised data should be collected by facilitators. Data collected should include: a

student's full name, date of birth, prison number and offence, prison establishment, and date of commencement and completion of FM programme. If these data are collected accurately, it will result in the maximum return from future reoffending analysis conducted by the MoJ.

Building on the Justice Data Lab analysis

The Justice Data Lab will shortly extend their reconviction analysis to prisoners released in 2011. We recommend that Safe Ground ask for the original FM cohort to be re-analysed as this should substantially increase the size of the cohort and, potentially, the statistical reliability of the analysis.

We recommend that Safe Ground should use any new information from the JDL to recalculate the cost benefit analysis using the same methodology and cost data in the body of this report.

In November 2013, the Justice Data Lab released reconviction impact findings from 19 very similar NOMS/ESF employability schemes. The JDL found that in nine of these schemes there was sufficient evidence to draw conclusions about a positive impact on reoffending. The impact of these nine schemes on reoffending varied considerably. Safe Ground may want to encourage other organisations delivering family interventions aimed at reducing reoffending to submit their data to the JDL so that Save Ground can benchmark the performance of the Family Man programme against its counterparts.

Looking to the future

“Transforming Rehabilitation” (TR) is the government's far-reaching change programme to tackle reoffending. The main features of TR are:

- Dividing the current probation service into two parts: the National Probation Service which will continue to service the courts, work with victims and supervise high-risk offenders and 21 new Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) who will work with low and medium risk offenders. The work of these 21 CRCs is being put out to competitive tender
- New mandatory supervision for all short term (those serving less than 12 months) prisoners
- The creation of 82 resettlement prisons²⁸ where all prisoners should serve the last three months of their sentence, the aim of which is to facilitate better pre-release planning and supervision and support on release

There are a number of implications of TR for the Family Man programme:

- TR has stimulated a high level of political interest in identifying exactly what forms of interventions are effective at reducing reoffending. Safe Ground may wish to highlight the findings of this study

²⁸ A full list of resettlement prisons can be found at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/transforming-rehabilitation/resettlement-prisons>

and re-submit a larger cohort of FM graduates to the Justice Data Lab in order to generate official, public information about the impact of Family Man

- Safe Ground may wish to consider the possibility of offering “refresher” programmes at resettlement prisons in the three months directly prior to release. To do this, Safe Ground would need to negotiate with the new CRCs on an individual basis
- It is currently not clear what level and form of resettlement work will be provided by the non-resettlement prisons. There have been discussions that these prisons may lose some of their resettlement budget which will be transferred to the new resettlement prisons. Safe Ground may want to use their existing good relationships with prison governors to keep informed of the latest decisions concerning these funding issues
- Over the longer term (initial TR contracts are set to be between 7 – 10 years with the possibility of a three-year extension period); the intention is that custody and community reoffending budgets are joined up to provide better continuity of service. Safe Ground might wish to consider designing, for FM prison graduates, a community-based element to the FM programme which focuses on reducing reoffending

SAFE GROUND RESPONSE TO ‘OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE’: AN EVALUATION OF THE FAMILY MAN PROGRAMME

This month the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR) published their in-depth evaluation of Safe Ground’s Family Man programme. The research used pre and post-course surveys and interviews with programme graduates, family members and staff from three prisons to assess the programme’s impact across a range of outcomes. The study also included a matched-control group reoffending study and a cost-benefit analysis.

As a result of their research findings, ICPR have made nine recommendations for how Safe Ground can continue to develop and improve the programme in future years.

As an organisation that believes evaluation should be central to informing programme development, Safe Ground has listed each recommendation below with details of the steps we are taking to implement ICPR’s recommendations or, in some cases, our reasons for not doing so.

Recommendation 1: “Safe Ground should consider **building in greater flexibility to the programme content** to meet the needs of the diverse student population attracted to taking part in the programme. For life sentence/long-term prisoners this might involve setting goals around constructive use of the rest of their time in prison, rather than focusing on imminent release.”

Our response: The flexibility of the Family Man programme has always been one of its greatest strengths and over the past 11 years it has been delivered successfully to a broad range of men in prison, from lifers to short-sentenced prisoners in 30 establishments across England and Wales. The programme is designed to respond to the needs and ambitions of the group, which will inevitably be influenced by how much longer they have to remain in prison. As this evaluation clearly highlights, this flexibility was absent from the group of long-term prisoners interviewed, who felt the programme, and in particular the ‘What Next’ session, lacked guidance and progression opportunities that were relevant to men with a considerable amount of time left to serve.

In the past 24 months Safe Ground has taken significant steps to improve and consolidate the quality assurance provided to each delivery site. One element of this is providing guidance and support to the Family Support Worker to ensure agencies invited to the ‘What Next’ session are suitable to help the students and their supporters begin implementing the goals outlined in their Family Action Plans. For men on longer sentences this might include; the establishment’s education department, the Prisoners Education Trust, local family support agencies and organisations able to help family members with the financial and emotional challenges of long term separation.

There is also now a stronger emphasis during Family Man training that the goals set in the Family Action Plans should be achievable within the timespan of one year, regardless of whether the student will be in custody or the community. The goals are broken down into stages and are time-bound within the SMART goal model; an approach, which is explained to the men and at the supporters’ session before they begin working on their Action Plans.

These additional elements of support had not been introduced at the time the interviews were conducted but we welcome the feedback and are working to ensure the programme is as valuable as possible for all future students, regardless of their sentence length.

Recommendation 2: “Safe Ground should consider asking facilitators to **assess the literacy levels of each cohort** of students to determine whether some lessons should be adapted. It may be beneficial to **vary the level of literacy exercises** for some students on the programme.”

Safe Ground response: Family Man was designed to try to ensure that possessing a low level of literacy would not be a barrier to participating in the programme. The student workbooks were designed in partnership with the Dyslexia Institution, alongside the Offender Learning and Skills Unit of the Prison Service and the Department for Children, Schools and Families to ensure the content was accessible to as many students as possible, regardless of their prior educational experience or literacy level.

In prison, as in most walks of life, there exists great diversity in educational attainment. In each Family Man group there will be students who have no problem completing the reading and writing exercises, as well as some who find it extremely challenging. This evaluation featured one such group where literacy levels were high and some participants felt the written content was overly simplified to the point of being patronising.

Safe Ground has long recognised the wide range of literacy levels in prison. When delivering Family Man training, we encourage tutors to create worksheets for more advanced students to complete that can be submitted for Level 2 qualifications, as opposed to Level 1, which the course is currently mapped to. We also advise that where literacy levels are high, extra time can be allocated to discussion and debate, a luxury in many classes due to the programme’s intensive structure, as the written exercises will take less time to complete.

This evaluation has unearthed that this guidance has not been communicated clearly or consistently enough and it is something we will be allocating specific time to in set-up meetings and programme reviews, as well as in training from hereon.

Recommendation 3: “Safe Ground may want to consider examining the range of relationships within each cohort. Given that Family Man positions itself as a family relationships programme, rather than specifically a parenting programme, it may be beneficial to **provide break-out sessions for students who have grown-up children or no children** in order to, **enable this group to focus less on parenting** and more on the variety of family relationships that exist. “

Safe Ground response: Although Family Man was specifically written to look at the needs of the whole family, not just children, it is apparent from this evaluation that Safe Ground needs to do more to reinforce the importance of exploring a broad range of family relationships. Currently tutors are advised to refer to the pre-programme interviews and the groupings exercise in lesson one to get an idea of the family situation of their group. However this could also be covered more in the contact Safe Ground coordinators have with the tutors before and during the programme delivery.

Since the fieldwork of this evaluation was conducted, Safe Ground has conducted refresher training with one establishment specifically around ensuring Family Man is appropriate for different audiences. Some of this content has now been included in our 4-day residential training at HMP Training College and we are confident that these revisions, alongside additional support early in the programme, will ensure discussions and activities are not overly focused on parenting in future classes.

Recommendation 4: “The **‘What Next’ day should be tailored to meet the needs of each individual cohort** of students. Safe Ground should assist the facilitators to achieve this. For example: in cohorts where there are no men with substance misuse issues, Drug and Alcohol Teams/services should not be present. Safe Ground should work with the facilitators to identify suitable statutory and voluntary groups to attend each *individual* ‘What Next’ day and help the facilitators to secure buy-in from these agencies.”

Safe Ground response: The ‘What Next’ session is an essential component of the programme, providing students and their supporters with the opportunity to begin working towards the goals set in their Family Action Plan. Ensuring that there is a range of agencies appropriate to the needs and ambitions of the cohort is therefore critical to its success. The pre-programme interviews conducted with the men should inform the Family Support Worker of the needs of the cohort and the What Next session should be planned according to those needs.

This evaluation is not the first time concerns have been raised over the appropriateness or range of support agencies present at ‘What Next’ sessions at specific sites. This issue has been a key driver in Safe Ground designing and implementing a more rigorous model of quality assurance to ensure FSWs are provided with appropriate support. At training more is done to help FSWs identify appropriate junctures in the programme to speak to students and supporters about their progress to ensure that any new needs or goals can be reflected in the range of agencies at the ‘What Next’ session.

Better tailoring of the course, to each cohort, has been and remains a key priority for Safe Ground. In the past two years Family Man, along with its sister course Fathers Inside which also includes a ‘What Next’ component, have been delivered to new populations, including men exclusively with substance misuse issues and foreign national prisoners. This diversity helps us to continue striving to make sure the ‘What Next’ session is as relevant and useful as possible to maximise positive outcomes for students and their families.

Recommendation 5: “**Cell-based refresher courses** should be considered. The Family Man programme attracts men serving long sentences; however, it is difficult to measure its impact for those individuals who complete the programme in year four of a fifteen year sentence. Refresher programmes will not only consolidate the work done in the full-length programme prior to an imminent release but will be invaluable for any future Safe Ground reoffending studies as comparisons will be able to be made between graduates of the formal eight week programme and graduates of the programme who also received a refresher course.”

Safe Ground response: Safe Ground has long considered developing refresher courses for graduates but has lacked the capacity to do so. Whilst we welcome the idea of providing men the chance of consolidating their learning, we do not believe a cell-based course would be appropriate as the course is built around a methodology with group-work and active learning at its core. The high level of movement of prisoners in the secure estate could make the management of such a programme challenging, particularly in terms of recruiting enough graduates in establishments that do not predominantly hold longer sentenced prisoners, who tend to be transferred less often.

The shifting policy focus to shorter-sentenced prisoners also reduces the capacity and resources available for the development of a refresher-course, however this is an option Safe Ground will be exploring under NOMS and the European Social Fund's 2014-20 Operational Programme which will focus on prisoners serving mid-length sentences (3 years remaining or less), for whom a pre-release refresher course may be more appropriate.

Moreover, Safe Ground has been awarded a grant by NOMS to develop and pilot a through-the-gate family support programme for young men at HMYOI Brinsford, which combines group work in custody with one-to-one sessions post-release to help participants consolidate and build on their learning. Should this pilot prove successful, we will be looking to expand the model to other young adult establishments in the coming years.

Recommendation 6: "The 'What Next' day could also provide Safe Ground and the facilitators with an opportunity to include **a talk by a Family Man graduate** who has been released from prison and has successfully secured a training scheme or paid/voluntary work. If such an element was included it would enable students to see what can be achieved post release."

Safe Ground response: Safe Ground welcomes this idea. Although there can often be security issues clearing graduates for the purposes of a prison visit, providing this perspective at the 'What Next' session could offer a source of encouragement and inspiration for students. This recommendation also ties into Safe Ground's aim to build a network of programme alumni for whom we can provide opportunities to engage in dialogue with senior policy makers on pertinent issues, including prison education and family relationships.

Recommendation 7: "**Multi-method evaluations** are likely to be the best approach to capturing and measuring the effectiveness of the Family Man programme."

Safe Ground response: Safe Ground recognises that a diverse evidence base is critical both to demonstrating the programme's impact and to informing its development. This evaluation was commissioned to offer a multi-method approach and during the past two years we have engaged in a number of other research projects that will enable the programme's evidence base to expand still further.

As part of a consortium commissioned by NOMS and BIS, Safe Ground has helped to develop and pilot a toolkit for service providers delivering family relationship interventions in criminal justice settings. This toolkit, which consists of a menu of academically validated pre and post-course, scaled questionnaires, will be incorporated into future research and evaluations (it is a little too long to be included as standard for every programme) and we will be analysing the findings to further identify effective components of the course and those where improvements or revisions are required.

We are also keen to explore the impact of the programme on the wider prison regime, given testimonies from numerous prison officers that Family Man can improve relationships between students and staff and help contribute to a more relaxed, less confrontational environment on the wing. Safe Ground had requested pre and post-course adjudication data from the Ministry of Justice for inclusion in this evaluation but unfortunately it could not be processed in time for publication. However the data have now been received and will be analysed over the coming months. We hope to present the findings by the end of 2014.

Finally our role as steering group members on the Justice Data Lab has enabled us to contribute to an initiative set up by the Ministry of Justice to allow statutory and third sector organisations to assess the impact of their work on reconviction. Since this evaluation has been completed, Safe Ground has submitted a third, larger sample of Family Man graduates to the Justice Data Lab which returned a statistically significant reduction in frequency reoffending compared to a matched control group.

Recommendation 8: “To enable Safe Ground to benefit from any future Justice Data Lab submissions, **standardised data should be collected** by facilitators.”

Safe Ground response: Safe Ground has introduced two elements to our routine data collection process to facilitate the submission of larger samples of Family Man graduates to the Justice Data Lab in future years. Firstly, with support from ICPR, we have modified our student consent form to ensure it clearly explains why we are asking each participant for their personal details, what we may use it for in future years and how we will ensure it is stored securely and not shared with anyone beyond the Ministry of Justice.

Secondly, our post-course data collection form now requests that tutors submit limited individual data (names, dates of birth and prison numbers) of each programme graduate who has signed a consent form. This has enabled us to begin building a much bigger sample of graduates that will hopefully encourage more robust findings from the Justice Data Lab in future.

Recommendation 9: “In the long-term the intention is that custody and community reoffending budgets are joined up to provide better continuity of service. Safe Ground might wish to consider designing, for Family Man prison graduates and those on community sentences, **a community-based Family Man programme** which focuses on reducing reoffending.”

Safe Ground response: During the time this evaluation was being conducted, Safe Ground has been developing a community based adaptation of Family Man, in partnership with Hampshire Probation

Trust and Spurgeons Invisible Walls, so we are pleased that ICPR has independently arrived at such a recommendation.

Delivered part-time over seven weeks, Family Man Community Programme (FMCP) has now been trialled five times in Southampton with men on community sentences as well as those recently released from prison. Whilst the programme remains a work in development, an evaluation of the second phase of trials demonstrated increases in confidence, communication skills, feeling part of a community and knowledge of accessing support services, and has recently featured as an example of promising practice in a Centre for Social Justice Report on community sentencing. FMCP is currently entering its final development phase in partnership with a selection of probation trusts across England.

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