



New Year 2018 Newsletter #10

Welcome to our latest newsletter and updates about some exciting new projects we have been working on.

In this edition we'll be focusing on Family Voice, updating you on our new Impact Reports with news about training in West Sussex and our family support services.

Family Voice

Family voice is vital to the work of Sussex Prisoners' Families. Families have often experienced trauma which has left them powerless and bewildered. Research shows us that empowerment is key to recovery from trauma as it allows people to regain their voice and exercise control over their world. But family voice is also essential in helping us developing services that will best meet the needs of those left behind when someone has gone to prison.

This year has seen some innovative and exciting developments in this area and our families have made themselves heard in a range of ways:

Books: We have worked with families to produce a book chapter for the Prisoners' Families Handbook to be published early next year by global academic publishers Palgrave. Most of the research around prisoners' families focuses on children of prisoners and their care-givers with the needs of parents and carers of adult prisoners going unnoticed, so we have interviewed mothers of adult prisoners who have been attending one of our support groups and provided a platform for their views and their experiences.

Policy. Two families from the support group travelled to London and were among a small group to be interviewed face to face by Lord Farmer for the Farmer Review into strengthening family ties in prison.

Prison Forum: On a local level, family members attend a prisoners' families steering group at HMP Lewes where they have made useful suggestions. Their ideas have been listened to carefully by the prison and have led to improvements to the visiting experience, including a new advice leaflet for families, new books, games and reading materials and a new 'Meet the Governor'

question and answer session for families at the prison.

Research: We wanted to find out more about the needs and wishes of prisoners' families so together with research organisation North RTD and Safer West Sussex Partnership we started listening to the voices of prisoners' families and professionals in West Sussex through a programme of workshops, focus groups, individual interviews and on-line surveys.



Hardworking friends at the Horsham workshop

The full report from the West Sussex Prisoners' Families Scoping Study will be available in the spring.

Multimedia: 190 children and young people and 62 adults took part in the Hidden Voices workshops. We were delighted to have the stories screened as part of the Brighton Fringe Festival.



The short films produced express the young people's experiences of the criminal justice system and give an insight into the issues faced and the wider impact of imprisonment on families. Watch the films here:

<https://vimeo.com/user63476739/videos>

Impact Reporting

We have been supported by University of Brighton, a University of Sussex Internship and the Social Research Hub who evaluated our volunteer service, First Stop Advice Line and family support groups.



The University of Brighton report: 'Stakeholder-led Impact Evaluation of the Court and Prison Volunteer Services' by Victoria Stallwood indicated that 'the volunteer service is clearly valued by court staff, addressing unmet needs ...

and given the court volunteer service is autonomous and entirely free for families, represents a significant positive impact.'

The Social Research Hub and University of Sussex Intern evaluation found that:

- ❖ The majority of calls to First Stop were from East Sussex residents (33%), followed by West Sussex residents (19%) and Brighton and Hove residents (14%).
- ❖ Two thirds (66%) of all calls to First Stop were known to be from Sussex residents. However, this could be more given 18% of calls did not provide a residency address.

Interestingly, 16% of calls were from outside Sussex, with families calling from Bournemouth, Surrey, Birmingham, Shropshire, Croydon, Stanstead, Kent, Dover, Northern Ireland and Bulgaria and we were able to signpost families to support services in those areas.

We were also pleased that the findings showed that:

- ❖ The majority of family members agreed or strongly agreed that the support received made them feel less anxious and less isolated.
- ❖ The majority of families say they received information that was clear and easy to understand and addressed their concerns.
- ❖ All of the families who responded said they would recommend SPF to others.



Discussions with families at the support groups showed that the main benefit was: 'the support received from other members'. Family members attending the support groups suggested that it was particularly valuable to gain support from others who had been through and experienced the emotional turmoil at different stages in the process and they reported that the support group provides a non-judgmental environment which they appreciated.

Our Annual Review of 2016-2017 is now available to view on our website.

<http://www.sussexprisonersfamilies.org.uk/annual-report/>

So, how have we been doing over the last few years? Between December 2014 and July 2017 we achieved the following:



Family Outreach service:

Thanks to support from Hastings and Rother Reducing Health Inequalities Grant, Hastings Foreshore Trust and the West Sussex County Council Members Big Society Fund, we have been able to build our services with a small new outreach team.

Look out for Lauren Fenwick, (West Sussex South which covers Arun, Chichester, Worthing and Adur), Hope Westbrook (West Sussex North which includes Horsham, Crawley and Mid Sussex) and Sophie Anthony who covers Hastings & Rother. The team may contact you to say hello but if you'd like to catch up with them do get in touch.

HMP Lewes family visits and Court Family Support

Thanks to Awards for All, The Worshipful Company of Weavers and Sussex Community Foundation we have been building our volunteer family support services at HMP Lewes. The prison staff have been really helpful and we are all working hard to improve the experience for visiting families, making the reception area more child friendly with toys and games, having magazines, information and advice available and volunteers helping out at the visiting area snack shop.

We're excited to be working really closely with the prison staff, the new family service provider

Spurgeons, the Forward Trust and other services within the prison to improve the families visiting experience.

We've been able to get support from Hall & Woodhouse and The Allen Lane Foundation towards the court service and we had a fantastic response from the University of Brighton Active Student programme and from the general public across Sussex and recruited another 15 volunteers for the Court Family Support service and 8 new volunteers for the HMP Lewes prison visits service.



Here are some of our latest volunteers working hard during their induction and training workshop.

We will be having another volunteer recruitment drive in the spring so if you know anyone interested in either the Prison Visits or Court Volunteer roles then please go to our website to access application forms. And we're keen to involve people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.



Non-Executive Directors

To take us forward through our next stage of growth and help us build our services, we are excited to be recruiting non-executive directors to our Board. We are particularly looking for someone with Marketing, HR and/or Financial Management skills or with experience of strategic development. More information can be found on our website. If you know anyone who would be interested, please let them know and we will be happy to chat more about the role.

Hidden Sentence Training

Thanks to the West Sussex Members Big Society Fund, we are delivering a series of Hidden Sentence training workshops in each of the seven districts of West Sussex through 2018. Hidden Sentence takes delegates through the offender journey to explore the impact of imprisonment on families, providing information and knowledge about the criminal justice system and how to access resources for children and for families.

Date	District
12 th April	Chichester
30 th April	Littlehampton
18 th May	Lancing
1 st June	Burgess Hill
6 th June	Horsham
12 th July	Worthing
24 th September	Crawley

The workshops are free but places are limited so be quick if you want a place. Register here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/sussex-prisoners-families-16563475359>

A message from family members we have been able to support:

'I found the lack of communication for advice a very difficult factor to accept when my elderly husband first went to Lewes. It would have been a very distressing time for all the family if I had not had the support of the Sussex Prisoners' Families. It would be a great help to everyone if this organisation was made known to everyone as early as possible and not just by word of mouth'.



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Thanks to our supporters: Allen Lane, The Weavers, Sussex Community Foundation, West Sussex County Council, WSCC Members Big Society Fund, Brighton and Hove City Council, Hastings and Rother Reducing Health Inequalities Fund, Hastings Foreshore Trust, UnLtd, Awards For All, Hall and Woodhouse, Greggs

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