

**Minutes**  
**Cross-Party Group on Children and Families**  
**Affected by Imprisonment**  
**18 September 2019**  
**6 – 7.30pm**

**Attendees**

Mary Fee MSP, Richard Lyle MSP, Nancy Loucks (Secretariat), Daniel Cairns, Elyse Brown, Sandra Hill, Cheryl Carroll, Eilidh-Jane Carroll, Cassandra Donaldson, Gary McKay, Councillor Ashley Graczyk, Lindsay Jessiman, Tracey Thomson, Lorna Kettles, Valerie Macniven, Sarah McHardy, Sandra Smith, Maura Brady, Denise Jennings, Hannah Dickson, Louise Gallagher, Jennifer Ferguson, Niamh Doyle, Dr Dinah Aitken, Katherine Malin-August, Helen Chamier-Tripp, Kirstie Freeman, Graeme McKerracher, Chris McCully, Michelle Lloyd, Alison Bavidge, Alison Clancy, V W Dickenson, Angela Dulley, Tracey Burns, Gavin Phillip, Jackie Walker

**Apologies**

Valerie Macniven, Linda Bendle, May Chamberlain, Louise Gallagher, Melanie McLean, Kirstie Freeman, Karyn McCluskie, Steve Harte, Fiona Harte, Alec Spencer, Jack Sutton, Grace Gracie, Laura McShane, Liz Leese

**Welcome and Apologies**

Mary Fee welcomed the group and the Cabinet Minister for Justice, Humza Yousef. She explained that the meeting would begin with the AGM and be followed by a Q&A with the Cabinet Secretary.

AGM – Nancy Louck

Election of office bearers

Mary Fee was nominated as Convener, seconded by Kate Philbrick

**Update on Parliamentary Business**

- Mary will be speaking in the Conservative Business debate about trust in the Justice System and the abolition of automatic early release. She would be focusing on the care needs of prisoners who are being let down in the Justice System and would welcome any PQs to be submitted to her office.
- Mary Fee recently received a query regarding the Independent Prison Monitors and again would welcome any information via email on how they now function and their effectiveness.  
**ACTION: full group**

**Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

- The minutes of the meeting were approved as accurate.
- One matter carried over was the lack of engagement at the Family Strategy meetings at HMP Addiewell. Elyse Brown noted that there had not been a family strategy meeting for a year and that there was no longer an FCO. Martin Wightman (SPS) emailed that Addiewell will resume their meetings post summer and that he would contact both Addiewell and Kilmarnock later this month for a progress report.
- Mary Fee will raise a PQ regarding the lack of FCOs.
- Actions for Richard Lyle – some still outstanding, but he will follow these up  
**ACTION: Richard Lyle:**
  - write to HMP Edinburgh to enquire what the standard procedures are for family visits and propose they be reviewed.

- write to the Justice Committee regarding the need for consistency in the way prison visits are handled
- approach Fulton MacGregor about Carol and Elyse presenting to the Justice Committee.

### **Independent Care Review – Justice and Care work stream and recommendations regarding Children with Imprisoned Parents**

- Mary introduced Vonnie Sandlan, who gave an overview of the Independent Care Review, and Jade Kilkenny (Community Justice Scotland and Independent Care Review)
- Vonnie will distribute slides if requested

Jade explained that the Justice & Care work stream of the Independent Care Review sub-committee on children with imprisoned parents focused on the following:

- Prevention of children and young people going into care, and appropriate planning and support for those who need to enter the care system
- Key professionals are aware of the impact of parental imprisonment so the focus was on how to plan and support this
- Children and young people with a parent or carer in prison have a voice and understanding about the decisions made that affect them
- Children and young people who are adopted away because of a parent's imprisonment are connected with their biological family history
- Reduce worry for children and young people about the care and welfare of their parent in prison

### **Questions and Discussion**

Mary Fee thanked both Vonnie and Jade for the contribution and asked:

- Can care experience children with a parent in prison easily visit that family member?
- Can children who are in care in a secure unit go back to their care givers once they leave the unit?

Ease of visits depends on many different factors. Young people are not getting the support they need to make the transition into independent living.

There was a general discussion around the fact that the care system has changed very little in the last 40 years and going forward listening to those who had lived through care would be beneficial to shaping the future.

Vonnie thanked everyone for their sharing and invited anyone to contact the Care Review with comments, which can help shape the recommendations of this Review.

**ACTION:** participants to send any further comments to the Care Review

Crossreach asked a question on the barriers around obtaining counselling. The consensus was that there was not enough provision to meet the demand; that the types of counselling offered need to be more person-specific; private counselling was too expensive for most people; and lack of easily accessible training pathways led to not enough trained professionals. Mary agreed to ask about the number of courses and spaces for training for counsellors for Children & Young People.

**ACTION:** Mary to ask about availability of training for counsellors

The group asked about consistency in the way that children from a care setting are treated when visiting family in prison. Vonnie will ask the question at the next Independent Care Review meeting and will report back

**ACTION:** Vonnie to report back regarding consistency for prison visits when children are in care

### **Update on Children' Voice Conference**

- EJ Carroll attended this conference and gave the CPG an update on the conference

### **Update on INCCIP Conference**

- Nancy Loucks gave an update the Youth Ambassadors panel at the INCCIP conference

### **LOOP – Loved Ones Of Prisoners**

- Elyse Brown gave a reminder and update on what LOOP is and distributed a leaflet

### **Children's Version of Council of Europe recommendations**

- Children of Prisoners Europe will be publishing these recommendations in November 2019

### **Update from Alison Bavidge – Social Work Scotland**

- Alison Bavidge from Social Work Scotland updated the group on how are they are bringing Health & Social Care into Scottish prisons. She can be contacted via website Social Work Scotland website and is very happy to visit groups to discuss this. This should eventually roll out to all prisons including private prisons.

### **Date of next meeting**

The Cabinet Secretary will be attending the next meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November. Please send questions in advance.

Future meetings are as follows:

27 November: Cabinet Secretary for Justice	1 - 2.30pm
29 January 2019	6 - 8pm
25 March	6 - 8pm
27 May	6 - 8pm