

ABERDEENSHIRE COMMUNITY PLANNING BOARD – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2017

HMP & YOI GRAMPIAN FAMILY CENTRE AND HELP HUB – FUTURE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

1 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the current work of the Family Centre and Help Hub at HMP & YOI Grampian and the benefits that this resource brings to the areas within the legacy Northern Community Justice Authority area, and beyond.**
- 1.2 Agree for the Chair of the Board to write to the Chairs of other Community Planning Partnerships to seek confirmation of future funding contributions to ensure the continued operation of the Family Centre and Help Hub.**

2 Background

- 2.1** This report is presented to the Board on behalf of the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership. The Board previously received a paper on the redesign of community justice that outlined the transition from a regional arrangement via the Northern Community Justice Authority to a new model where community justice services are planned and delivered at a local level (<http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/aberdeenshire-community-justice-partnership/>).
- 2.2** The Family Centre and Help Hub is located in a purpose-built centre in the grounds of HMP & YOI Grampian in Peterhead. It is the first Family Centre and Help Hub (FCHH) to be built by the Scottish Prison Service as part of the national development of Prison Visitor Centres. It provides a welcoming environment for families, most of whom travel long distances to the prison from numerous locations, often by public transport. There is a café which provides affordable, healthy meals and snacks to the visitors and staff of HMP & YOI Grampian, play facilities where visiting children can play and explore, secure storage (for family belongings which cannot be taken in to visits) and confidential space for private meetings.
- 2.3** The Family Centre and Help Hub (FCHH) at HMP & YOI Grampian opened on 8th September 2015 and since then, it has provided a range of supports to visitors and their families. Action For Children manage the FCHH, supported by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and in particular, a Family Contact Officer who is seconded to work in the FCHH. The FCHH's most basic function is to provide a safe place where visitors to HMP & YOI Grampian can relax and spend time before and after a visit to the prison. It is a one stop shop where visitors can access a wide variety of support and advice and they can get up to date information about the prison.
- 2.4** Action for Children have worked collaboratively with a range of agencies including Families Outside, Shelter Scotland, Early Years Scotland, NHS

Grampian, Job Centre Plus and Police Scotland to bring in additional services and supports to the centre and have worked closely with colleagues in SPS to improve relationships between prisoners and families. Services and supports available include healthy activities, healthy eating and parenting, 'Keep Well' checks, and support to deal with financial and debt worries/concerns.

- 2.5 In addition to building a relationship with visitors and supporting them to attend visits, Action for Children can provide general information about visiting and provide inductions for families who are unfamiliar with the process of attending visits and the procedures for getting into the prison. All first time visitors are offered an Induction Programme by staff at the FCHH. This includes a DVD created by prisoners to show what the inside of the prison looks like, including their accommodation. Staff explain what the security and other processes are for attending a visit. This has proven to be a really useful tool in alleviating some of the anxieties and worries of families, as they can see the reality of where their family or friends are staying rather than what they have seen on the TV or in films.
- 2.6 One of the main aims of the FCHH is around building community capacity to support people with convictions. Whilst the FCHH is located within the grounds of the prison, it is very much a community resource and can provide valuable support for both those in custody and in the community.
- 2.7 The Action for Children Annual Report highlights that during 2016/17, there were 13,146 visitors to the FCHH in total and 1,605 of these were children. Not all visitors will have accessed the services but will have made use of the facilities in some way (e.g. the café, etc.). Information was provided to 659 of these visitors and a further 2,118 were provided with support in relation to visits, transport, emotional support and other issues. Around 70% of visitors were from Aberdeen City, with 11% of visitors coming from Aberdeenshire. A further 19% of visitors came from other areas including Highlands and Islands (4%), Moray (1%), other parts of Scotland (7%) and England / Wales (7%).
- 2.8 Action for Children operate a sign in process at the FCHH to try and capture information about where those accessing services are coming from. However, not all visitors are willing to sign in, for various reasons. The following statistics relate to those persons who signed in and provided postcode information. In the first 4 months of 2017/18, there was a notable increase in the total number of visitors to the FCHH in comparison to the same period the previous year (905 in 2017/18 compared to 633 the previous year). Of the 905 visitors to the FCHH, 59% were from Aberdeen City, 21% from Aberdeenshire, and 7% from Moray. This is a positive development as it demonstrates that awareness of the FCHH and the services that are available is increasing.
- 2.9 Between April and August 2017, 13 visitors to the FCHH completed an evaluation form providing feedback on their experience, which were then collated by Action for Children. Nine of the 13 visitors brought children with them to the FCHH. All 13 were visiting male prisoners in HMP & YOI Grampian, the majority of which were convicted. 69% were visiting their partner and 31% were visiting a parent. All 13 stated this was not their first visit. 46% had travelled by public transport, 38% had taken their own car and

15% got a lift from someone else. Although the sample size is small, it is positive that:

- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that their experience of visiting the prison is better as a result of the Visitor Centre service;
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the facilities provided by the Visitor Centre make visiting the prison easier;
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the information provided by the Visitors Centre is useful;
- 85% agreed or strongly agreed that the Visitor Centre service helped them to keep family ties;
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of services which could provide them with support if they felt they needed it.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that if the Visitors Centre was not there, they would bring children to visit their parent/sibling less often;
- 90% agreed or strongly agreed that they believed that keeping contact by visiting the prison helps their children to maintain a strong relationship with their family member.

2.10 Although the service is still in its early years, it has proven to be valued by those with convictions and their families. Whilst it has been supported financially by the Scottish Government, the Northern Community Justice Authority and its partners in the initial years, the redesign of community justice has left some uncertainty in regard to future funding for the services at the FCHH. Section 27 funding for core Criminal Justice Services was previously distributed to local authorities via the NCJA, with projects such as the FCHH benefitting from funding allocated via this process. However, the disbanding of the Community Justice Authorities has meant that local authorities now receive their Section 27 funding direct from the Scottish Government, and while the Scottish Prison Service remain committed to covering the running and maintenance costs of the building, no arrangements have been put in place to secure further funding for the continued operation of the services at the FCHH. Although the NCJA and both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils have committed funding for 2017/18, the remaining authorities operating within the legacy NCJA area have as yet been unable to make any commitment to future funding.

2.11 Given the number of visitors from areas out with Aberdeenshire that visit the FCHH and access the services there, it may be appropriate that these areas are also asked to make a financial contribution to the continued running of the services available at the facility.

3 Implications for Local Community Planning Groups and Consultation with Local Community Planning Groups

3.1 There are no implications for the Local Community Planning Groups. However, the Family Centre and Help Hub can be accessed and utilised by anyone visiting friends or family members who are resident at HMP & YOI Grampian, and this extends to all parts of Aberdeenshire in which the Local Community Planning Groups operate.

4 Scheme of Governance

- 4.1 The Board is able to take a decision on this item in terms of Section P in Part 2A of Aberdeenshire Council's Scheme of Governance as the committee responsible for conducting the statutory process of community planning, to plan for, resource and provide services which improve local outcomes within Aberdeenshire.

5 Implications and Risk

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because this report is principally designed to advise Board members of the current position in relation to funding for services at the Family Centre and Help Hub. There will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics.
- 5.2 Action for Children employ a Service Coordinator, Family Support Worker, Volunteer Coordinator, Cook and Kitchen Assistant. In addition, Action for Children have recruited 12 volunteers to support the work of the FCHH. Staff from Families Outside, Shelter and Early years Scotland are also based at the FCHH. A Family Contact Officer is seconded to the FCHH from the Scottish Prison Service.
- 5.2 Action for Children were awarded £50,000 of Scottish Government funding per annum for a period of 3 years beginning in 2016/17 to deliver services at the FCHH. However, this allocation fell short of the income needed to operate the FCHH at current staffing levels. This shortfall is currently being met through Action for Children's voluntary income and a contribution from the NCJA. Action For Children are working in partnership to fill the funding gap, however, failure to close this gap may lead to reduced opening hours at the centre.
- 5.3 Additionally, agreement has still to be reached regarding how the services at the FCHH are to be funded in future, now that the NCJA has disbanded and Section 27 Criminal Justice funding is allocated directly to Local Authorities from the Scottish Government, with no provision made for services provided at the FCHH.
- 5.4 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: working with other organisations; and social risk – the Community Justice Partnership now monitors areas of work, including the FCHH, previously overseen by the disbanded NCJA.

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7th September 2017.