



Action for Prisoners' Families Three Year Strategy 2009-12

Vision:

Action for prisoners' Families wants a world where each prisoner's family gets the support they would like and need.

Mission:

Action for Prisoners' Families is a membership organisation for those interested in the well being of prisoners' families and works to reduce the negative impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families by:

- providing advice, information and training to its members
- providing its members with opportunities to network to share experiences, concerns and successes
- listening to prisoners' families and promoting, developing and supporting services and resources that they need or would like.
- lobbying for improved structures, procedures, conditions and services that affect the well being of prisoners' families

Values:

We believe that:

- Families should not be judged or discriminated against because of having someone in prison
- All families, parents and children affected by imprisonment should have access to information, resources and services as soon as someone is sent to prison.
- Contact between prisoners and their families should be positively encouraged and duly recognised as a significant factor in reducing re-offending
- Families should be actively involved in the prisoner's progression through their sentence from induction through to release and in policy development.
- Children have the right to good quality contact with a parent in prison; to be protected from discrimination and harm; to have their views taken into account and to have advocates to speak on their behalf
- Families and children of people in prison should be seen as families first and have their needs met accordingly

Aims:

We want:

- Criminal justice structures, procedures and conditions that take into account what prisoners' families would like and need.
- Criminal justice structures, procedures and conditions that support the maintenance of strong ties between prisoners and their families.
- Prejudice about prisoners' families eliminated.
- Provision of accessible services in the community and at prisons that each prisoner's family needs or would like.

Brief History

The Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups was set up in 1990 by a group of prisoners' families support organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in 2002, the Federation changed its name to Action for Prisoners' Families. In 2008 APF agreed with Families Outside in Scotland and NIACRO on Northern Ireland that we would restrict our membership to England and Wales. Action for Prisoners' Families continues to work closely with these two sister organisations.

As an umbrella organisation Action for Prisoners' Families has played an important part in the introduction of improved conditions and services for prisoners' families. It has drawn on the experience and expertise of its members to lobby for change and has taken part in high level policy development and planning processes where it has contributed the challenging and knowledgeable voice of grass roots service providers.

Collaboration and partnerships have always been at the heart of Action for Prisoners' Families' work. We have forged strong and lasting relationships with others to develop and put into practice innovative and effective new policies, practices and protocols.

Action for Prisoners' Families has also promoted and disseminated best practice and developed resources for prisoners' families and training and resources for those providing services for prisoners' families. It has an excellent record of delivering imaginative and innovative resources and events. The establishment by Action for Prisoners' Families of a free prisoners' families' helpline in 2003 was an important milestone for prisoners' families and for Action for Prisoners' Families.

Current challenges and opportunities

Since Action for Prisoners' Families' last strategic review in 2006 the landscape has changed significantly:

The importance of supporting the family is increasingly acknowledged in government policies most notably the 'Think Family' approach which resulted from the Social Exclusion Taskforce Families at Risk Review. The latest round of government funding for work with families – the Children, Young People and Families Grant and the Parenting Fund – included prisoners' families as one of the specifically targeted client groups.

NOMS has recognised the importance of maintaining family ties by including a Children and Families Pathway as part of its Reducing Re-Offending Delivery Plan. Action for Prisoners' Families has a place on the Sub-Board with oversight of work on this pathway and convenes the Third Sector Reference Group which advises the Sub-Board. NOMS has also appointed a dedicated Children and Families of Offenders Policy Lead.

For the first time the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child singled out the children of prisoners as one of the groups being failed by the UK government in their 'The State of Children's Rights Report' in 2008.

At the same time we are facing a time of political and economic uncertainty. An election was held in May 2010. Charitable trusts will have fewer funds available and the government will restrict its spending. It will be more necessary than ever to demonstrate the value that Action for Prisoners' Families represents as an infrastructure organisation and to show that every pound of funding that we receive is working hard.

Umbrella bodies such as Action for Prisoners' Families can play an important role in ensuring that front-line services are able to deliver cost effective services by: gathering and disseminating evidence about effective practice; ensuring that the voices of service users and providers are heard by policy developers; identifying and facilitating opportunities to add value to existing initiatives. At a time of restricted funding there is likely to be a focus on front-line services and Action for Prisoners' Families will need to ensure that it genuinely engages with and reflects views from the sector and that it has robust management processes including monitoring and evaluation. Action for Prisoners' Families also needs to make clear that it is not duplicating the work of other organisations – that it has a unique role.

Action for Prisoners' Families' establishment should remain relatively small. This will enable us to stay light on our feet and flexible in responding to the needs of the sector. Breadth and depth of expertise is located in our membership – Action for Prisoners' Families staff collate, communicate and support this expertise.

Three year goals

Action for Prisoners' Families held a facilitated strategy development day for all staff and one for the Board and Senior Managers. In the next three years we want to secure the unique role of Action for Prisoners' Families as the source of expertise on prisoners' families and to achieve improvements in

policy and practice based on grass roots experience. We will pursue the following key goals and indicators:

a) active engagement of extended membership

Indicators: increased membership drawn from all sectors and disciplines; effective membership structure established; detailed, up-to-date and accurate membership records; a range of robust, and accessible mechanisms for engaging members in discussion, consultation and information exchange; range of events for members and others.

b) ensuring that prisoners' families have access to the advice and information they want and need and that their voices can be heard by policy makers.

Indicators: Expanded prisoners' families' membership of Action for Prisoners' Families; communication channels for prisoners' families developed to discuss experiences and engage in policy development; publication of resources and news for prisoners' families.

c) identification and promotion of key policy developments

Indicators: a quality visitors' centre in every prison; an efficient visits booking system in every prison; the collection in England and Wales of information on prisoners' families that is based on an understanding of the importance of the welfare of these families and of the contribution of strong family ties to reducing re-offending; the Corston recommendations affecting the families of women prisoners implemented; service providers meet the needs of families of serious offenders; policy improvement recommended in line with key policy, social, political, technical, research and international developments; inclusion on key advisory groups.

d) fostering good practice in front line delivery

Indicators: Mechanisms developed to link membership of Action for Prisoners' Families with quality practice; develop, deliver, promote and monitor training for those whose work involves prisoners' families; publish practice guidance that draws on members' expertise; answer and monitor requests for advice from members; affordable Action for Prisoners' Families events to develop skills and understanding; proactive and responsive information service to members covering practice innovation, research findings, funding opportunities and policy developments.

e) maintaining a responsive, authoritative and robust organisation

Indicators: clear message about our role, scope and benefits; strong, expert governance; Action for Prisoners' Families acknowledged as the primary source of expertise on prisoners' families; devolved financial management systems yielding regular detailed business activity and project management reports; systematic fundraising and income generation; clear line management structure and procedures; staff able to access key documents and key operational decisions; two year rolling business plan including resource requirements and cash flow forecast;

formal project management; annual risk analysis; routine collection of data about, monitoring of and evaluation of Action for Prisoners' Families operations.

September 2009 (revised May 2010)