NIPS strengthening families feed-back

1. Do you agree that positive family contact is an important factor in
   a. **Helping people cope with imprisonment**:
      - ‘It helps people maintain relationships and stops people living in a bubble when they are inside – Gives people something to look forward to’
      - ‘Helps them know they have someone to come home to and somewhere to go’
      - ‘Visits have kept us in contact – Keeps him sane and excited for getting out’
      - ‘Phone calls are good’
      - ‘Skypes good’
   
   b. **Returning to the community**:
      - ‘Without contact people are lonely and have nowhere to go which may lead them to hostels and could lead to them reoffending’
      - ‘Helped him get back into his way of living – Freedom’
      - ‘Help for when a dad can’t return to his family’
   
   c. **Reduce reoffending**:
      - ‘Support around them on the outside’
      - ‘Knowing that we are sticking by him, he has said he won’t reoffend’
      - ‘Fear that he could lose his family again – Impacts his choices’
      - ‘Services e.g. AA, mental health need to be set up for dads as soon as they are released to reduce reoffending’

2. Do you think the family strategy should be to support and encourage family engagement in order to get positive results for those in custody?
   
   **All of the group agreed**

3. Is there enough currently done in prison to promote family engagement?
   - ‘Yes’
• ‘No – he’s been away a good couple of times and I’ve never had NIACRO – it’s a great support now and impacted on the children’s behaviour’
• ‘I was 15 mins late (transport delay) and I wasn’t allowed in- not a lot of transport support’

4. Suggestions for improvements:
• ‘More frequent family visits for longer’
• ‘Transport support’
• ‘Longer visits without having to do courses’
• ‘More times/activities with the kids – More frequent visits’
• Longer visits - Dads having time to play with their children during visits’

5. Do you agree that:
   Family members should be treated with fairness, dignity and respect –
   All agreed
   Wherever possible families should be included in their relative’s rehabilitation –
   • ‘Yes to break them into family life’
   • ‘Yes agree’
   • ‘Would be useful to know what was going on – would help in family life with children’
   • ‘Yes – as we reunite as a family’

Every family is unique –
All agreed

The best interests of children are important in any decision making –
• ‘Yes agree’
• ‘Yes : Family unit is important/children should not be treated any differently just because their dad is in prison’
• ‘Yes – Family should not be treated differently because a parent / relative is in prison’

6/7/8 How can NIPS work with other organisations to support family engagement and better outcomes for people in its care?
• ‘I don’t like the way children are searched – Make visiting at the prison easier for children’
• ‘More freedom with the children’
Family contact – How can NIPS support and encourage family contact and wider social networks?

- ‘Family visits like child centered visits and play matter visit’
- ‘Skype – More than once a week’
- ‘Family visits and skype calls once a week?’
- ‘Family visits and skype calls more regularly’
- ‘Skype to be more widely available’

How can NIPS promote a positive experience when visiting prisons in N.I?

- ‘Make the rules more clear and the same each time you’re visiting’
- ‘More patience from some of the prison officers’
- ‘Somewhere for families to stand when it’s cold’
- ‘Should be able to bring prams through’
- ‘When visits are running late e.g. Bus – Extra time should be added to the end’
- ‘More understanding from some of the prison staff – Not to be treated like we have done something wrong’
- ‘Clearer rules of what is allowed and what is not’
- ‘Rules clearer’
- ‘Extra time if running late – Transport’
- ‘There needs to be more transport from Belfast’
- ‘More time with dad – More structured activities e.g. cooking classes / learning a new skill together’.

Families feel included and engaged:

Do NIPS encourage families to feel included and engaged to support the person in prison e.g. are families included in decisions, are they treated with respect by staff and any suggestions?

- ‘Yes’
- ‘Yes’
- ‘Yes’
- ‘Yes – when I went on visits to Magilligan- not so much at Maghaberry’
- ‘Depends on who is on . Made to feel very uncomfortable by prison officers on a weekend visit’
• ‘Most of them – Some are very ignorant. Don’t really welcome you – Just another number’

Families are safe and well: NIPS will support wellbeing and positive life outcomes for people in custody and their families.

Do you think staff have a good understanding of safety and wellbeing and respect appropriately

• ‘Yes – Staff are good at responding’
• ‘As far as I know’
• ‘Yes’
• ‘Anything I ask them they respond’

Suggestions:
No suggestions

Are people in custody and families aware of services to support safety and wellbeing?

• ‘yes I was offered everything’
• ‘Not made aware when he went in – better knowledge only through CHIP’
• ‘Yes’
• ‘Made aware through NIACRO’
• ‘Made aware by NIACRO / other people I know’

Are NIPS working to improve services for children and families?

• ‘Yes – Visits are more friendly’
• ‘Yes – Family visits are good /Chip support has been great my social worker was unsure of prison policies and the chip worker helped with this and talked to my social worker’
• ‘Yes family visits do need to be more frequent and longer. Chip has been a great continued support for myself and my family especially’
• ‘They try their best – Chip has been positive for my family’

What do you think NIPS should do within the next 12 months to support families?
• ‘More family matters so we can have more child centered visits’
• ‘Longer and extra visits at weekend’
• ‘Tea- time visits’
• ‘Changing facilities for dads to help them feel more involved and let them practice’
• ‘Meet with dog handlers and dogs’
• ‘Body scanner instead of dogs – don’t like the feeling of dogs searching’
• ‘Explaining what way the dog works’
• ‘Longer visits’
• ‘Spend more time with families – More than one visit a week and outside school time visits’

Children’s feedback

What’s the best thing about visiting and what could be better?

• ‘(The best thing is) when you first see them when they come in’
• ‘I think what could be better is being able to sit beside them’
• ‘I also think what could be better is when you’re talking to your parent for the prison officers not to stare’
• ‘Get a full hours visit’
• ‘There could be music to lift the spirit’
• ‘Seeing new things in the tuck shop’
• ‘(The best thing is) Playing with toys and making new friends’
• ‘Dogs you can see’
• ‘Having a sandpit with toy tractors and cars’
• ‘Have a toy shop’
• ‘A library to read and have toys in’
• ‘More chairs and benches – have extra seats’
• ‘Computers and xbox/ playstation’
• ‘A big tv and films’
• ‘Facetime’
• ‘For the parent to get out of their seat to play’
• ‘To be able to do stuff together’
How do you contact your family member? What could be better?

- ‘(I use) Phone calls – FaceTime would be good because you get to see them’
- ‘A better routine with phone calls would be better’
- ‘Longer visits’
- ‘Bigger groups of families visiting at the same time’
- ‘Dad to be able to have a mobile phone’
- ‘I use Skype’
- ‘Longer phone calls and longer visits would be better’
- ‘Longer visits’
- ‘Phone calls and visits make you happy’