

The Play in Prisons Project: An Evaluation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report describes the theory, development, implementation, and evaluation of an innovative project aimed at supporting children who have a parent in prison. Play in Prisons (PiP) is a Big Lottery funded project that ran for three years in the South West of England. PiP was set up to support and enhance parent-child relationships through the medium of play and interaction – with the aim of reducing the negative effects of parental imprisonment, strengthening family ties, and ultimately reducing reoffending.

Studies have shown that play is a viable and effective intervention for children with various special emotional and physical needs. Research has also shown that frequent visits with imprisoned parents, if in a non-threatening setting, lead to better social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for the children of prisoners. Enhanced visiting programmes – like the PiP project - address the need for extended physical and emotional contact between children and their parents, which is generally not catered

for during general domestic visits in prisons. A more in-depth summary of the research base that supported the theory behind PiP is provided in the body of the report.

Prior to PiP, **pact** recognised a gap in opportunities for children and families to maintain and strengthen their relationships during parental imprisonment. Whilst play services during prison visits has increasingly become the norm, the opportunities for positive parent-child interaction during general domestic visits remains limited due to the restrictive nature of the prison environment during normal visiting times. As such, PiP offered support and guidance to parents and their children,



through providing fun and enjoyable experiences with enhanced opportunities for parent-child interaction, as well as providing opportunities for imprisoned parents to reflect on their role as a parent.

We evaluated the project's success continuously throughout the delivery of the project, and during the last few months have thoroughly evaluated the project's success using a mixed-methodology approach. We used written surveys, observations, semi-structured interviews and a reflective exercise with PiP staff to identify benefits and challenges in implementing such a project. A total of 384 service

users took part in our evaluation - 146 children and young people and 238 parent/carers and imprisoned parents.

The children, parent/carers, and imprisoned parents were very consistent in their feedback and offered clear messages about how PiP has affected them. They overwhelmingly felt that PiP supported children in feeling safer and less stressed when visiting. Prisoners felt that their involvement in the project has strengthened their family relationships and that PiP will help make re-joining family life easier when their sentence is complete.

They were also clear about what contributed to these outcomes. PiP gave them a chance to act like a 'normal' family. Parents and children got to play together in age-appropriate ways. They had the freedom to move about and play and interact physically with one another – an important component of parent-child bonding which is restricted on general domestic visits. Our evidence also



suggests that our Table Top Play Scheme has dramatically improved opportunities for parent-child interaction on general domestic visits.

Additional findings from the evaluation are included in the body of this report. There are also several appendices that provide detailed discussions of the analysis.

We are grateful to the Big Lottery funding that has enabled us to create such a positive difference to the lives of the children, families and imprisoned parents that have benefited from participating in our project.

INTRODUCTION

Who is pact?

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (**pact**) is a charity which supports people affected by imprisonment. We provide practical and emotional support and a range of services to prisoners' children and families and to prisoners themselves. Our mission is to support prisoners and their families to make a fresh start and to minimise the harm that can be caused by imprisonment on offenders, families and communities.

For more information, please write to Prison Advice and Care Trust, Park Place, 12 Lawn Lane, London, SW8 1UB, telephone 020 7735 9535 or visit our website at www.prisonadvice.org.uk

What is Play in Prisons?

Play in Prisons is a Big Lottery funded project which has been delivered in HMPs Channings Wood, Dartmoor and Exeter over the past three years. The Play in Prisons project (PiP) was set up to support and enhance parent-child relationships through the medium of play and interaction. Through doing this we aimed to reduce the negative effects of parental imprisonment, strengthen family ties, and ultimately reduce reoffending.

Since August 2008, the project has aimed to improve relationships by helping children feel safer and less stressed when visiting a parent in prison, by introducing a number of new initiatives centred around play involving all the family – these initiatives include: specialised children's visits; dads-only sessions; baby and toddler sessions; gym visits for prisoners and their children; and table-top play boxes for families to use together during general domestic visits. Such initiatives are intended to improve understanding surrounding parent-child interaction amongst prisoners and provide them with the opportunity to learn about and practise this skill with their children. As well as the above, we have also developed preparatory workshops for prisoners attending our events to provide further, more in-depth opportunities to reflect on their role as a father.

Why Develop a 'Play in Prisons' Project?

In order to provide a background to the concept of the Play in Prisons project and the theory of change behind it, we looked at research on play, specifically focusing on using play as a means for reducing stress and helping children cope with the separation from their parent. We also looked at research relating to play as a tool for building relationships between parents and their children, as well as considering the impact on imprisoned parents.

Studies have shown that play is a viable and effective intervention for children with various special emotional and physical needs – such as dealing with divorce, post-



traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), witnesses to domestic violence, and children dealing with separation and loss (Le Blanc et al, 2001). Further, research has shown that frequent visits with imprisoned parents, if in a non-threatening setting, lead to better social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for the children of prisoners. Finally, enhanced visiting programmes – like **pact's** Play in Prison project - address the need for extended physical and emotional contact between children and their parents, which is generally not catered for during domestic visits in prisons.

▪ **What Play Means for Children**

The benefits of play for children cannot be underestimated. It is widely accepted that play is essential to development, as it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of children. Play has been described as a "universal and inalienable right of childhood" – it is intrinsically motivated and changes to match the child's view of the world (Landreth 2002). Play is a way for children to become



familiar, and comfortable, with their environment (Piaget 1962). It brings together concrete experiences and abstract thought, and it is the symbolic function of play that is so important (Piaget 1962). Play is the one thing children can have control of, allowing them to feel more secure (Landreth 2002). This is particularly important when considering the importance of play within a prison environment.

▪ **Play as Therapy**

There are several different forms of play therapy that vary in terms of fundamental principles and the role of the therapist, child and parent. However, all play therapies recognise the power of play when dealing with traumatic or stressful experiences and situations. Below is evidence to display the impact of play therapy on children with additional emotional needs.

A meta-analysis is considered among the highest level of evidence when it comes to academic research standards. A meta-analysis combines the results of several studies that address the same issue, in this case the effectiveness of play therapy, to estimate what effect the results of the studies may say about the larger population. One such analysis of 42 research studies of play therapy demonstrated that it is a viable and effective intervention for children with various additional emotional and physical needs (Le Blanc et al 2001). Another meta-analysis of 93 play therapy research studies concluded that play therapy is a viable therapeutic intervention for a range of childhood problems and that using parents in play therapy produced the largest effects (Bratton et al 2005).

Although we are not arguing that Play in Prisons provides play therapy for children who have imprisoned parents, we are suggesting that the play-based programmes we deliver for children and parents within the prison setting provide therapeutic opportunities, such as enhanced opportunities to interact with one another, make sense of their situation together, and ultimately support children visiting to feel safer and less stressed.

▪ **Importance of Child-Centred Visits**

'It is estimated that there are 160,000 children with a parent in prison each year. This is around two and a half times the number of children in care, and over six times the number of children on the Child Protection Register. Based on the projected prison population growth, this group could rise to around 200,000 in the next five years' (Ministry of Justice, 2007). To complicate the situation further, there is 'no shared, robust information on who they are, little awareness of their needs and no systematic support' (MoJ, 2007). Given these statistics and the situation this marginalised group of children face, it seems of paramount importance that we develop child-centred programmes to cater effectively for children visiting prisons.

Studies show that regular prison visits are beneficial to children of imprisoned parents, as well as to the parents themselves. If these visits occur in a non-threatening environment, they can lead to improvements in parent-child relationships, which can, in turn, lead to reductions in anti-social behaviour and increases in self-esteem among the children of imprisoned parents (Johnston 1995a).

Visiting between imprisoned fathers and their children in the traditional visit setting can be difficult for parents, children, and caregivers alike. Murray (2003) states 'It can be a very upsetting and frightening time for many children. Long journeys, waiting at the prison gates, searches and sniffer dogs, an environment where physical contact or play is difficult can all exacerbate the problem.' Hairston (2001, p. 157-158) also explains some of the problems associated with traditional visits:

'Prison visiting is both psychologically and physically demanding for children and adults, as the visiting environment in most prisons is poor... Standing in line for hours to be cleared for a visit that lasts less than half the time spent waiting, being subjected to pat and frisk searches and rude treatment, and visiting in crowded, noisy, dirty, overheated facilities, or with parents and children separated by a glass barrier, are hardly conducive to promoting family bonds.'

Aside from the uncomfortable environment, regulations also affect the quality of visits. Rules governing the timing, conditions, and duration of visits restrict social interaction between parents and children and pose obstacles to parent-child attachments (Hairston 2001).

In contrast to domestic visit settings that allow only a minimal (to zero) amount of physical contact, enhanced visiting programmes allow children and their parents to interact more closely in a more child-oriented environment, which reduces the amount of stress experienced by parents and children during visits (Johnston 1995b). Hartworth and Hartworth's (2005) findings concur, stating that 'routine visits do little

to support family relationships and can add strain to them, which is exacerbated by prison protocols and staff behaviour. Opportunities when parents could spend a sustained period of time with their children were extremely beneficial to all involved.'

Perhaps most importantly for children, enhanced visits normalise the interaction between imprisoned parents and their children and, therefore, play during these visits provides an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children. This type of visit often provide more flexible visiting schedules, play areas with toys and activities, and longer, more meaningful contact times (Block and Potthast 2001). Child-centred visits are a beneficial, low-cost intervention that can mitigate the negative impacts of stress and separation; they play a key role in children's future development, and help reduce future anti-social behaviour on the part of the children (Johnston 1995a).

It is also worth discussing the impact of enhanced opportunities to build relationships for imprisoned parents in more detail. A recent report released by the Ministry of Justice (2010) confirms that building strong family relationships reduces the likelihood of recidivism. The reduction in likelihood occurs due to a number of reasons. Warr (2002) in MoJ (2010) points out that strong family relationships can '...reduce the amount of time spent in groups of same-age, same-sex friends



(a known risk factor in offending)'. Sampson and Laub (1992) in the same report, add that developing a strong relationship with their children ...'provides the individual with something to lose if they return to prison' and finally, strong bonds and attachments with children and other family members '...can give lives a sense of purpose, meaning and direction' (Maruna et al, 2003 in MoJ 2010). Moloney et al (2009) again in MoJ (2010) concur with the above, stating that 'Individuals who devote themselves to raising their children...will find that crime and imprisonment is incompatible with such roles'.

This literature review demonstrates the scale of importance that maintaining positive relationships through parental imprisonment has on the life outcomes for both children and their imprisoned parents. The complexities of providing the opportunity to maintain positive relationships within the prison environment have also been discussed. The need to develop the 'Play in Prisons' project is clear.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Development of the Project

Prior to the development of Play in Prisons, **pact** recognised a gap in opportunities for children and families to maintain and strengthen their relationships during parental imprisonment, the importance of which has been highlighted in the literature review. It is now common practice for play areas to be provided in visits halls within prisons and this service is vital in helping to alleviate the stress and anxiety that children may endure when visiting a prison. However, the opportunities for positive parent-child interaction during general domestic visits remains limited due to the restrictive nature of the prison environment during normal visiting times. As the literature review evidences, the importance of maintaining relationships and providing opportunities for positive parent-child interaction during imprisonment of a parent cannot be underestimated, hence **pact** built a project proposal and was generously granted three years funding to deliver the project by the Big Lottery Fund.

Project Outcomes

Listed below are the three primary project outcomes. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed, pictorial presentation of the aims and outcomes of the project.

Outcome 1: *By the end of three years over 2,000 children visiting a parent in prison will feel safer, less stressed and better able to deal with the separation from their parent.*

Outcome 2: *Imprisoned parents of children in three south west prisons will have access to programmes and facilities which will improve both parties' experience and understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction and will have the opportunity to practise this skill.*

Outcome 3: *By the end of three years a comprehensive model of good practice on providing first rate children's services will be disseminated to 139 prisons across England and to voluntary sector agencies that they partner, thereby informing and improving national service delivery.*

In practice, the above have been broken down into short, intermediate and long term outcomes. In the short term, we offered support and guidance to parents and their children, through providing fun and enjoyable experiences with enhanced opportunities for parent-child interaction, as well as providing opportunities for imprisoned parents to reflect on their role as a parent. We believe that this has contributed to children feeling safer and less stressed when visiting, that we have helped imprisoned parents understand the importance of parent-child interaction and the significance of their role, and that we have provided an additional support network for children and families effected by imprisonment. This ultimately promotes enhanced relationships and stronger family ties, which impacts not only on children's ability to cope with separation during parental imprisonment, but also improves prospects for resettlement back into family life upon release. Evidence also suggests this has a positive impact on reducing the likelihood of re-offending (MoJ, 2010).

PiP Services and Initiatives

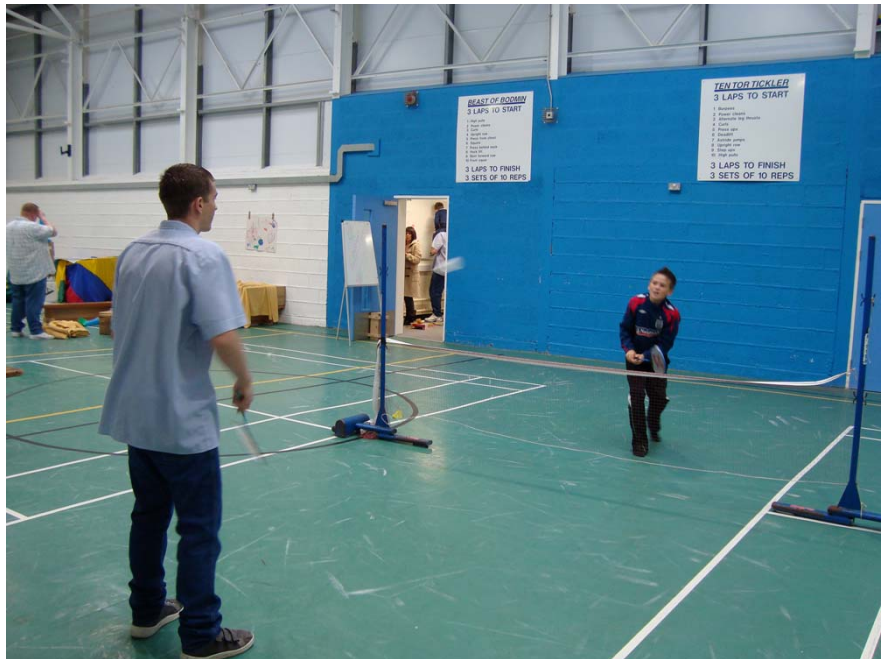
In order to meet the project outcomes above, a number of services and initiatives were developed. Below is a description of each PiP programme;

▪ **Child-Centred Family Days and the Gym Programme**

This service was delivered at HMPs Dartmoor and Exeter. These special events were very different to normal domestic visits. The events lasted for between four and five hours and ran during school holiday periods (this is due to prison staffing issues at weekends). The events allowed fewer families to attend in comparison to a general visit in order to provide a less chaotic visiting experience and more personal space for quality family interaction.

During the course of our events prisoners were allowed to move freely. Freedom of movement allowed families to behave like 'normal' families again and provided far more opportunities for prisoners to engage with their children in a natural manner, at their children's level, doing the things that their children wanted to do.

As well as free movement, PiP provided a variety of quality play activities and we did our best to cater for all ages and stages of development. All the



activities were designed to promote conversation, working together and having fun, in order to build upon and strengthen relationships between imprisoned parents and their children. Many of our activities resulted in the parent or child making something to give to one another. These small gestures went a long way to building bridges and providing positive memories for the families who took part in our events. There was a big emphasis on parental involvement throughout the day.

As part of every visit, the children and families had the opportunity to visit the prison gymnasium. The gym team at both prisons were heavily involved with facilitating this element of the visit and set up a variety of activities to suit all ages and stages of development. This programme was initially set up to meet the needs of older children; however, it proved to be valuable for all age groups when used to its full potential. The change of environment allowed a different type of interaction to take place, where children were able to run around unrestricted and let off steam, play rough and tumble with their father, play badminton, or build dens together out of big boxes and material. The gymnasium environment allowed for a more natural and fun way of interacting with one another.

During PiP child centred family days, everything possible was done to minimise the feeling of 'being in prison' for the children attending. This was achieved by:

- ✓ Unrestricted movement
- ✓ Prisoners not wearing 'bibs'
- ✓ Play and activities set up using the whole environment rather than restricted to the prison play area
- ✓ Visiting the gymnasium
- ✓ Providing a 'buffet style' family meal to share together at lunch time and trying to ensure the catering is child friendly
- ✓ Prison officers were encouraged to portray a more relaxed and friendly approach to children and families.

▪ **Dad's Only Sessions**

This service ran at HMP Channings Wood and was unique in its approach. The visit again lasted for around four hours and took place during school holiday periods only. The events allowed far fewer families to attend in comparison to a general visit for the same reasons as the family days. We also catered for fewer families in order to ensure our staff were able to offer sensitive support to individual fathers and their children during 'dad's only' time.

This session began with all visitors coming together in the visits hall in order to allow the children and fathers to be re-united as part of the wider family unit. The family then shared a buffet meal together and had some time to play together. The parent/carers then departed the visits hall and the imprisoned parent and their children were offered the opportunity to spend an hour and a half on a one-to-one basis. The PiP staff sensitively supported fathers in need of guidance or practical support and the same types of activities were available as on the family days.

These events offered a different kind of experience, where fathers were encouraged to take parental responsibility separately from any other care givers and where quality one to one time offered children and imprisoned parents' opportunities to get to know one another again. The same features existed in this type of visit as existed in the family day, with the exception of the gymnasium programme.

▪ **Baby and Toddler Sessions**

This was a new service which was piloted in the last year of the project at HMP Channings Wood. All the principles were the same as the 'Dad's only' session, the only difference being that the visits specifically catered for children less than four years of age. For this reason, the visits took place outside of the school holidays and ran on a more regular, monthly basis.

The imprisoned parent was able to change their baby's nappy, rock them to sleep, read them a story and feed them, as well as make use of all the baby and toddler activities and facilities on offer. This type of visit provided them with the opportunity to take sole care and responsibility for their babies and young children and allowed them to experience what it is like to be a father, sometimes for the first time.

Without this type of visit, it would be extremely difficult for imprisoned fathers who were detained when their children were very young and sometimes not even born yet, to establish, build and maintain a bond with their children.

- **Table Top Play Scheme**

In order to support children in feeling safer and less stressed when visiting a parent in prison during normal domestic visits we developed a scheme that intended to compliment the general play area service and support parent-child interaction.

The scheme aimed to improve the involvement of imprisoned fathers in their children's play during this restrictive visiting time, by creating a system where children were able to take equipment from the play area to the tables at which the imprisoned family member must remain seated. By allowing equipment back to the tables, the children and parents were able to spend more quality 'family time' together and the equipment provided encouraged positive parent-child interaction. The equipment was stored in themed boxes and there were a number of themes to suit different ages and interests.



Although this is a very simple concept, taking games and toys back to the table is prohibited in many establishments. We worked hard with prison security departments in order to ensure this scheme worked effectively both from a 'relationships' perspective and a prison security perspective.

- **Understanding the Importance of Play Workshops**

The general level and quality of parent-child interaction was dramatically enhanced through the creation of PiP's specialised events, which inevitably impacted on the ability to maintain and strengthen family relationships during parental imprisonment. However, from our experience, some imprisoned parents struggled to relate to their children on visits and found it difficult to know how to play and interact appropriately after being separated from one another. With this experience in mind, we developed a series of workshops, which acted as a tool for preparing the prisoners involved in our child-centred events. On a wider scale, we intended that the workshops would help parents understand their children's development, learn about the importance of play and give them the opportunity to learn about how they can get involved in their children's play in order to build positive relationships with their children upon release.

"I had always considered myself a good parent until I came into prison. Doing this workshop has enabled me to reflect and consider how I can be a good parent whilst in prison."

The Understanding the Importance of Play (UIP) workshops were delivered at HMP Dartmoor and ran approximately two weeks prior to an event. There were five workshops in total, however, these workshops could be tailor made to fit in with the prison regime, from one day short courses to five more in-depth morning sessions. The main learning objectives focused on the importance of maintaining relationships throughout the prison sentence, reflecting on the prisoner's role as a father, understanding the role and benefits of play in children's development, involving children in the visiting process, and for the prisoners to participate in planning and setting up activities for the child-centred event. The workshops ended with providing imprisoned parents the opportunity to practise parenting and play skills in a child-centred, relaxed and enjoyable environment (during the event).

▪ **Project Literature**

We produced a variety of supportive literature as part of our service.

Children's Literature - As part of our mission in supporting children to feel safer and less stressed we produced age appropriate literature providing information and practical advice on what to expect when visiting the prison.

For younger children we distributed **pact's** 'My Visit' booklet. The booklet explains the visiting experience to children. It uses brightly coloured pictures, easy-to-understand text and there are spaces for children to draw pictures with their imprisoned parent. For many children, visiting prison can be a frightening, confusing or distressing experience. The My Visit booklet is designed to take away the fear, and to make visiting a more positive time.

For older children and young people we created a leaflet titled 'Visiting Soon?' The contents of this leaflet were formulated as a result of consulting directly with older children and young people about what information would be useful to them. The leaflet contains a step by step guide about what is likely to happen during a visit, with particular emphasis on the search procedures and drugs dogs. The leaflet also signposts readers to a number of support and advice agencies of significance to young people.

Both of these leaflets were sent out to families (with prior permission from parent/carers) prior to attending their first PiP event.

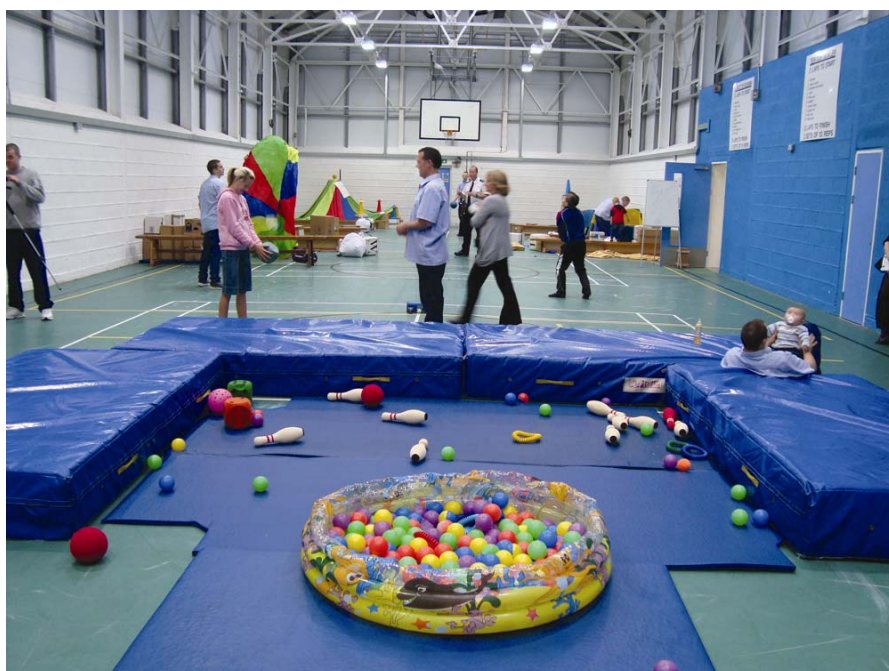
Prisoner's Literature - PiP produced two leaflets for imprisoned parents in order to support them in understanding the importance of parent-child interaction. The leaflets focused on how to make the most of visits with their children, one being specifically for PiP events and the other concentrating on general domestic visits. The events leaflets were handed out at least one week prior to an event taking place.

As well as the leaflets, PiP also funded a new and revised edition of the book 'Daddy's Working Away: A Guide to being a good Dad in prison'. The book was written by 'Care for the Family', serving prisoners and their families. It is an easy-to-read, practical book and is a realistic and honest attempt to deal with the difficult issues facing prisoners who, although away from their children, still want to be good dads. The book covers issues such as, what to tell the children, keeping in contact, discipline, money, the importance of listening and helping children through school issues. The book is intended to support imprisoned parents in maintaining relationships with their children and focuses on being the best dad they can be whilst in prison. Daddy's Working Away was distributed widely across all three prisons, from probation teams, to education departments, libraries, the chaplaincy service, and to fathers attending our workshops and events. We aimed to reach as many interested imprisoned parents as possible.

▪ **Developing Best Practice**

As well as supporting children in feeling safer and less stressed when visiting, helping children cope with being separated from their imprisoned parent, and providing opportunities for imprisoned parents to understand the importance of, and practise, parent-child interaction (through the above programmes and initiatives), one of PiP's main aims was to disseminate good practice.

Much was learned over the project's three years of delivery, with regards to catering for children and providing quality play services and initiatives within prisons. The project was reflective throughout and adapted to fit in with the unique requirements and priorities of each prison, as well as being informed and shaped by all our service users. As part of the final phase of the project we developed an operational manual for planning and delivering child-centred events within prisons. This will continue to



be utilised in the prisons that we operated in, in order to support the ongoing delivery of this service in the absence of further funding.

In addition to our individual efforts, we also worked in partnership with 'Kids VIP' in informing 'The Family Day Toolkit: A Good Practice Guide to Running Prison Family Days'. PiP contributed to this guide by providing Kids VIP with experiences, expertise and planning tools, used and developed as part of Play in Prisons. The toolkit

provides practical information, guidance and tools in an easy to read and simple format. PiP has distributed this toolkit, along with a variety of other informative literature, across the prison estate and to voluntary organisations that work with children and families visiting prisons, in order to share best practice and inform national service delivery.

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Statistics on the Number of Children Supported

As Outcome 1 states, we had set a target of supporting 2,000 children visiting a parent in prison by the end of the three year project. We can say with confidence that we have more than met our target of supporting 2000 children.

Play in Prisons events, alone, have catered for a total of 1,105 children. Over the past twelve months we have recorded data on children who have attended more than one event. From this data, we have been able to calculate that over 50% of children involved in the PiP scheme are 'returners'. This information indicates that PiP should be considered an *on-going intervention* rather than a provider of *one off* experiences.

In addition to the children that attend PiP visits, we also took into account the children accessing the Table Top Play Scheme during general domestic visits. Based on current monthly statistics, an average of approximately 500 children visit the three Devon prisons each month. The significant majority of these children visit during general domestic visits. The specific number of children and families making use of this service is difficult to quantify due to the nature of the scheme and because partner organisations, not **pact**, support its delivery. However, we know from feedback from our partner organisations and the prison that the TTPS is well used and that on average approximately 500 children visit across the three prisons every month.

Methodology

Throughout the project's development, we consulted with and gained feedback from all our service users. This feedback helped shape the project into the service that it has become today. However, the final evaluation process involved a more detailed and fine-tuned approach to assessing the impact that we had on children and families affected by imprisonment and, indeed, the imprisoned parents themselves.

The final evaluation was undertaken by PiP's Project Coordinator, with consultation from **pact**'s Quality Assurance Manager. In order to evaluate the extent to which the project's outcomes were achieved, a number of methods were used:

- **Written Surveys** – completed to measure the success of our child-centred events. Surveys were designed for specific target groups: young children; young people; parent/carers; and prisoners
- **Observations** – of family interaction during both general domestic visits (using the Table Top Play Scheme) and during specialised events. All observations have been anonymised
- **Prisoner Interviews** – on how the project has impacted on them and their relationships with their children
- **Appreciative Inquiry** – carried out with PiP project staff members in order to reflect on the benefits and challenges of implementing and developing the play project

- **Literature Review** – including research on the value of play and the importance of child-centred visits for both children and prisoners.

A total of 384 service users took part in our evaluation. This figure is broken down to 146 children and young people and 238 parent/carers and imprisoned parents. With 31% of data originating from HMP Channings Wood, 35% from HMP Dartmoor and 34% from HMP Exeter, the spread of feedback was almost equal across all three establishments. As well as service user feedback, a total of 107 anonymous 'family observations' took place to assess the impact of the Table-Top Play Scheme.

Through completing the investigations listed above and consulting with a wide pool of participants, we gained an in-depth understanding of how PiP has impacted on its service users.

Consistent Messages from Children, Their Carers and Imprisoned Parents

The children, parent/carers, and imprisoned parents were very consistent in their feedback and offered clear messages about how PiP has affected them. They overwhelmingly felt that PiP supported children in feeling safer and less stressed when visiting. Prisoners felt that their involvement in the project has strengthened their family relationships and that PiP will help make re-joining family life easier when their sentence is complete.

They were also clear about what contributed to these outcomes. PiP gave them a chance to act like a 'normal' family. Parents and children got to play together in age-appropriate ways. They had the freedom to move about and play and interact physically with one another – an important component to parent-child bonding which is restricted on general domestic visits. Our evidence also suggests that our Table Top Play Scheme has dramatically improved opportunities for parent-child interaction on general domestic visits.

The specific feedback gathered, along with detailed analysis, can be found in the appendices. A summary of the key messages is provided below;

- **Children's Ability to Cope**

We asked all of our service user groups (with the exception of very young children) whether or not they thought PiP helped children feel less stressed and more relaxed during their visits. They overwhelmingly agreed that it did. Nearly all parent/carers consulted (more than 90% of 92 carers); felt that participating in PiP helped make their children feel less stressed. All the imprisoned parents who were interviewed strongly agreed that their children were less stressed and more relaxed when engaging with the PiP project. An average of 88% of young people across the three prisons felt they were less stressed when participating in a PiP event compared to a general domestic visit.

"It's not just the separation, but also coming home. The more time he gets to spend with his dad, the easier it will be for him to adjust when he comes home next month."

Parent/carer, August 2010

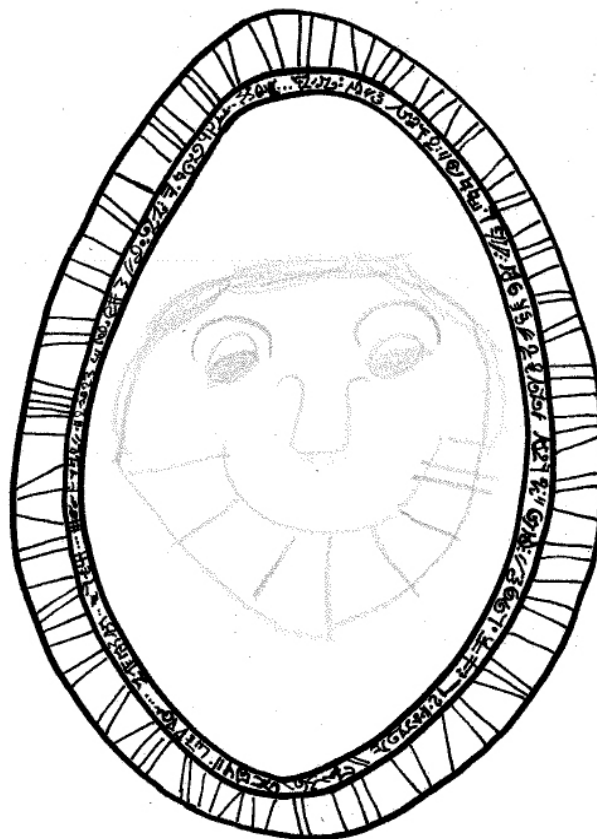
Children's perspectives on our work are of paramount importance to us. In order to consult with children effectively and in a child-centred manner, we utilised **pact's** 'Listening to Children' toolkit. When considering younger children's perspectives on how they feel, we felt it inappropriate to try to gauge levels of stress directly. Instead we focussed on whether they 'enjoyed themselves' or not. The children we consulted with offered great insight into how PiP made them feel. With an average of 99% of children reporting that they enjoyed their experience, we can confidently draw conclusions about whether they felt safe and whether they found the experience stressful. There are elements of the day which are out of control, such as entering the prison gates and the dog searches on arrival, which may cause anxiety initially. However, our data provides evidence that overall, the experiences on offer were positive, enjoyable and fun and because of this, children felt less stressed and more relaxed during our events when compared to a normal domestic visit. When asked if they wanted to tell us anything important about their day, one child commented "that I made my Dad happy, and me too", another concluded that he had had "a perfect day with Daddy".

"The gym was so good I forgot we were in prison"

Young person, April 2009

The Magic Mirror

In addition to finding out whether or not children felt less stressed during their visits, we also asked our service users why they thought PiP helped make a difference. The reasons offered were also very consistent. Three significant factors were identified in reducing levels of stress for visiting children: freedom of movement, spending time interacting like 'normal,' and creating a relaxed feeling of 'not being in prison.' When asked how the prisoners knew their children were less stressed, they commented upon their children's expression; "The look on his face...just delight!", how they appeared "happier", that they were more physically active, and that they were talking and interacting more with their parents. When asked why he thought his children were less stressed, one imprisoned parent commented; "Because there is more freedom...more chance to physically interact...the atmosphere is more relaxed and there is more time to communicate on a deeper, more emotional level."



If you looked in this mirror what would your face look like today?

Between 12% and 17% of young people did not know whether PiP had made a difference to their levels of stress and ability to relax and no one claimed that PiP had no effect on their levels of stress or ability to relax. The main reason stated for not knowing, was the fact that they had not attended a visit before and so felt that they did not know how they would feel after having attended a general domestic visit in comparison to a PiP event.

Among parent/carers only 3-4% (average) thought that PiP had not made a difference to their children's levels of stress or ability to relax. The main reason stated was the fact that they felt their child/ren were too young to know where they were or what was going on. Other reasons included that children were coping well under normal visiting situations and had not been stressed in the first place. Finally, some carers noted that no matter what we do, the children are still entering a prison environment and they have to leave their father there at the end of the day.

"The children being able to interact with their daddy in a normal relaxed way does them the world of good."

Parent/carer, April 2010

In addition to finding out about whether children were less stressed or not, we also consulted service users on children's ability to cope with being separated from their imprisoned parent. Most parent/carers, including prisoners, agreed that their children were better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent through their participation in PiP. However, the concept of being 'better able to deal with separation' is a challenging one to assess and is one that may develop and emerge

Use this space to include any extra comments on your experiences today.

For example; you could draw, write a poem, refer to song lyrics or simply add valuable thoughts and feelings that you think would help other children who visit their parents and step parents.



over time. In order to know truly the success in meeting this outcome we would require a longitudinal study, which we have not been able to complete as part of PiP's evaluation process. However, we can presume that by enhancing relationships between children and imprisoned parents, we are in turn creating securer attachments and more open relationships, which will impact positively on children's ability to cope with the separation.

When considering factors that impacted on children's ability to cope, parents again offered a very consistent message. PiP offered children quality time with their imprisoned parent in a relaxed environment and provided children with something to look forward to on a regular basis. During an interview, one prisoner commented that Play in Prisons has "made the sentence easier for all the family." Another focused on the 'quality

time' that our events offered, stating "it's about the quality time; it gives them a feeling of being in touch that a general visit doesn't". One prisoner commented on how "you can get up and do things, and so they're (children) at ease. It's more like home." The prisoners felt these simple factors contributed greatly to their children's ability to cope.

▪ **Family Relationships**

All prisoners strongly agreed that PiP allowed them to interact more positively with their children. Most prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction through their involvement with PiP, and most strongly agreed that the gym programme offered them opportunities to build relationships with their children that the visits hall did not.

Prisoners also felt that PiP events gave them time together as a whole family and being able to have lunch together made the family feel 'normal.' One prisoner commented "With the visits, you're gradually getting back into the family. The visits are about a whole family thing... She (daughter) gets to see us as a three. She'll respect me as part of the family".

Another theme that emerged was the opportunity for physical contact and free movement and the impact this had on interaction between prisoners and their children. Free movement and use of the prison gymnasium, allowed more opportunities for children and parents to show each other they care about and love one another physically, by giving cuddles, sitting on laps, holding hands, playing rough and tumble and generally having the freedom to behave 'as normally' as possible. This impacted greatly on families and their ability to maintain and build upon relationships.

"It was absolutely priceless for my son to be able to play with his dad for the first time in two years. I think having quality time like today will make it a lot easier for their relationship to go back to normal on release."

Parent/carer, February 2010

Although PiP events only took place during the school holidays, service users felt that the PiP programme of events gave their children the opportunity to spend quality time together on a regular basis. This allowed prisoners and children to maintain their bond, and thus supported them in building their relationship.

Many parent/carers also stated the PiP events provided them with reassurance that the imprisoned parent can still be a father and that the relationship has not completely broken down. The opportunity to witness their children and the imprisoned parent play together and spend quality time together would be almost impossible on a domestic visit. From this evidence it is clear that PiP has the potential to impact on deeper familial issues related to parental imprisonment.

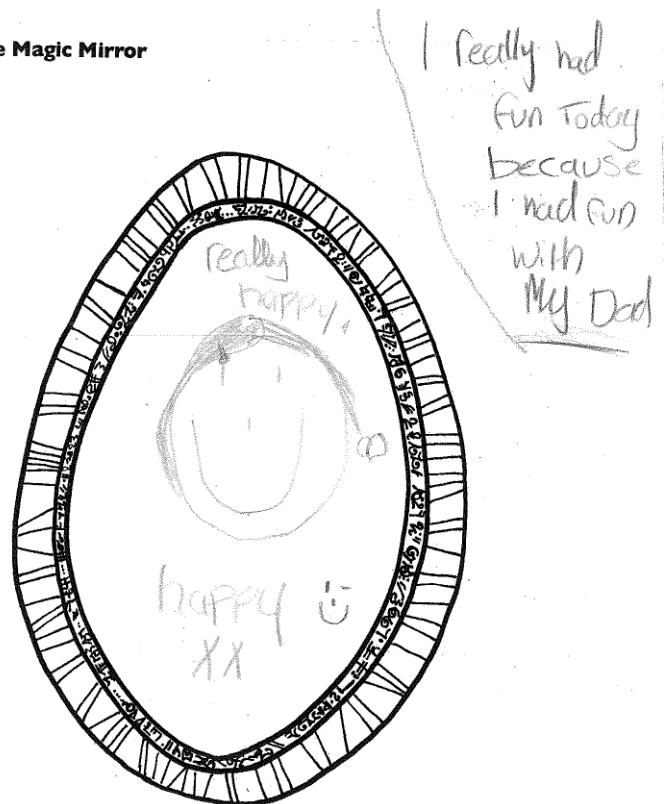
The Table-Top Play Scheme also had an impact on family relationships during general domestic visits. Our findings indicate that the scheme increased the length of time children and imprisoned parents spent together on a visit. It offered opportunities for collaborative play, which in turn promoted positive communication and enhanced interaction. The scheme also acted as a 'tool for talking' in situations where prisoners and children found it challenging to re-connect with one another. It allowed prisoners a sense of involvement and participation in their children's interests, which under previous regulations would not have been possible. Whether providing children with a simple means of escapism, or enhancing bonding opportunities during general visits, the scheme offered an enhanced visiting experience and opportunities to build relationships for all children and families who chose to make use of it.

▪ **The Future**

Play in Prisons allowed families, and prisoners particularly, to prepare for release. All prisoners interviewed after taking part in our UIP workshops agreed that PiP will help make re-joining family life easier when their sentence is complete. This may be because prisoners are given the chance to take responsibility and re-assert themselves as father figures once again. This opportunity to be responsible and become actively involved in their children's lives provided prisoners with confidence in their abilities and afforded them the opportunity to re-evaluate their priorities. The workshops allowed time for reflection and self-evaluation and encouraged prisoners to understand the significance they hold within their children's lives.

As stated previously, our evidence suggests that the project can impact not only on the confidence of the imprisoned parent, but also on the parent/carer's perception of the imprisoned father. Through providing parent/carers with the means to witness the imprisoned parent 'being a parent' once again, we were able to build up the lost confidence in the parent/carers perceptions of the imprisoned fathers' abilities and priorities. A prisoner explains, "It's easy for her (partner) to be angry with me for being in here, but her seeing what me and him (son) are like together in here makes it better. It builds bridges coming on these visits". These positive experiences, although limited in frequency, provide opportunities to build confidence in everybody's ability to deal with the situation as a family unit. Therefore, PiP has provided a means of strengthening not only parent-child relationships, but also parent-parent relationships.

The Magic Mirror



If you looked in this mirror what would your face look like today?

Although it is not possible to gain concrete evidence that the Play in Prisons project has improved opportunities for resettlement directly, our evidence clearly indicates that we are strengthening family ties. Through providing enhanced opportunities for parent-child bonding and quality family time, we have provided families with a means of keeping connected and maintaining those vital relationships that can reduce the likelihood of re-offending, as well as contributing towards breaking the cycle of inter-generational offending (refer to literature review for evidence).

Progress towards achieving the project outcomes

When considering the evidence presented in this report, it is clear that Play in Prisons has fully met the objectives set in the initial project specification. The points below summarise how each has been met;

Outcome 1: Children felt safer and less stressed when visiting a parent in prison during our events and our findings indicate that we also impacted significantly on children's ability to cope with being separated from their imprisoned parent (for evidence of statistics to support this statement please refer to 'statistics section' and Appendix 2: Analysis of progress towards Outcome 1).

Outcome 2: Prisoners within the three Devon prisons had access to a number of programmes and facilities which improved experience and understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction. All prisoners participating in Play in Prisons had the opportunity to practise this skill through being involved in our events.

Outcome 3: In June 2011, Play in Prisons disseminated a model of good practice on providing first rate children's play services to every prison across England, and to voluntary sector agencies that they partner, with the intention of informing and improving national service delivery.

CHALLENGES & RECOMENDATIONS

As listed in the methodology section, the PiP team used an 'Appreciative Inquiry' approach to reflect on the benefits and challenges of implementing and developing the play project. Below is a brief summary of the challenges we identified and recommendations for undertaking a project like PiP.

Challenges

Implementing a child-centred play project within a prison environment is very rewarding for all concerned, and is an invaluable service in supporting parents and children through imprisonment, but it also faces many challenges. The challenges the PiP project encountered are highlighted below in order to inform others of the difficulties which may need to be overcome when implementing new services and programmes.

- **Restrictive environment** – allowing free movement of prisoners and children is key to providing enhanced opportunities for quality interaction, but poses challenges to the prison, where restricting the movement of prisoners is an important element for maintaining control

- **Prison staffing** – in order to run an event there must be enough internal prison staff to support its delivery. This includes general operational staff as well as security staff. This can be difficult when staff shortage situations occur within the prison
- **Communication** - with key prison staff. This can be challenging for a number of reasons, often due to staff shortages, staff regularly changing roles, and varying priorities within each prison
- **Partnership working** – is paramount in providing the best opportunities for children and families. However, there can sometimes be difficulties in working with or bringing other organisations into the prison environment. These include prison security vetting, ensuring a mutual understanding exists between partners, communication between organisations and information sharing
- **Promotion and support** – the project must be fully supported by the prison if it is to embed into the prison regime successfully. This can take a significant amount of time to achieve and must be factored in to timescales when setting up a project of this kind
- **Security regulations** – many items which aid creative play opportunities are not permitted in the prison environment. All items within the prison play areas/brought in for the purpose of an event, must be listed on an up-to-date inventory and supplied to the security department in advance. This requires high levels of organisation and time allocated to 'stock take' on a regular basis.

Having listed some of the significant challenges encountered in developing PiP, it is important to point out that many of them were overcome through collaborative working, dedication and a flexible approach and so should not be considered barriers to establishing child-centred work within prisons. Rather, they have been noted to raise awareness, in order that others may consider the possible challenges that may arise when in the planning stages of setting up a new project.

Recommendations

Listed below are what we consider to be points worthy of recommendation when setting up prison projects of a similar nature to Play in Prisons. This list is not exhaustive, and recommendations vary in context, nevertheless, they are valuable lessons learned through PiP's development and we think they are worth sharing.

1. Make sure you are physically visible within the prison, as without a regular physical presence the project will struggle to embed
2. Be as flexible in your work as possible. Every prison is unique and from our experience, a 'one size fits all' approach will not work
3. Ensure all relevant prison departments and staff (Heads of Reducing Re-offending, Partnership Coordinators, Children and Family Pathway Leads, security, gymnasium, catering and visits staff) are aware of your work and are consulted and kept informed where ever possible. Planning meetings are vital when trying to maintain communication with so many people and departments
4. Ensure risk assessments and child protection procedures are current and clearly understood by all involved with the events process

5. Work with relevant partner organisations and volunteers when appropriate and possible. Working in partnership with others often leads to better outcomes
6. Preparatory prisoner workshops enhance experiences and opportunities during child-centred events and beyond and should be established where ever possible
7. The gymnasium element of child-centred events adds another dimension in terms of building relationships and promoting interaction. It should be incorporated into events as a priority
8. Involve prisoners and families within the planning process for events. Hold prisoner briefings, telephone families prior to events, send information to children and families, encourage prisoners to set up activities prior to the families arriving. All these simple processes allow for the best possible experiences
9. Keep visitor numbers low during events in order to reduce levels of stress and allow for enhanced opportunities for quality family time
10. We are there to support families re-connect, but remember to work sensitively in promoting quality family time and be aware of the need for space
11. Family photographs are a key memento of a child-centred visit and act as a physical reminder of their special day for many children. Funding for photography should be considered and procedures regarding 'consent' must be established
12. Ensure activities during events are age appropriate and promote collaboration (older children should be given specific consideration)
13. Seek any relevant in-house training the prison may be providing in order to enhance your knowledge and skills of working with offenders. Taking part in such training can build a stronger, more confident and prison-aware team.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the three years that Play in Prisons has operated, and through carrying out final evaluations of our programmes and initiatives, we feel confident that the project has been successful in addressing its initial aims and outcomes and has provided both stakeholders and service users with a valuable and much needed service. We have supported children in their ability to cope with the situation they have found themselves in, encouraged stronger parent-child relationships and have strengthened family ties, with the intention of creating brighter futures for the vulnerable children and families with whom we have worked. The service we have been able to develop through Big Lottery funding has made a positive difference to the lives of the children, families and imprisoned parents that have benefited from participating in our project.

"It has made the sentence easier for all the family...it's the only sense of normality that I have with my children. The **pact** days are the only little bit that we have all got left."

Use this space to include any extra comments on your experiences today.

For example; you could draw, write a poem, refer to song lyrics or simply add valuable thoughts and feelings that you think would help other children who visit their parents and step parents.

Days and days go
by and by
Without your parents by
your side.
When you come to this place
you have the time, you have
the space, to spend time
with your mum or dad, and
at the end you'll be glad,
and when you'll leave you get
upset but all you know you'll
have to wait to book another
family visit.

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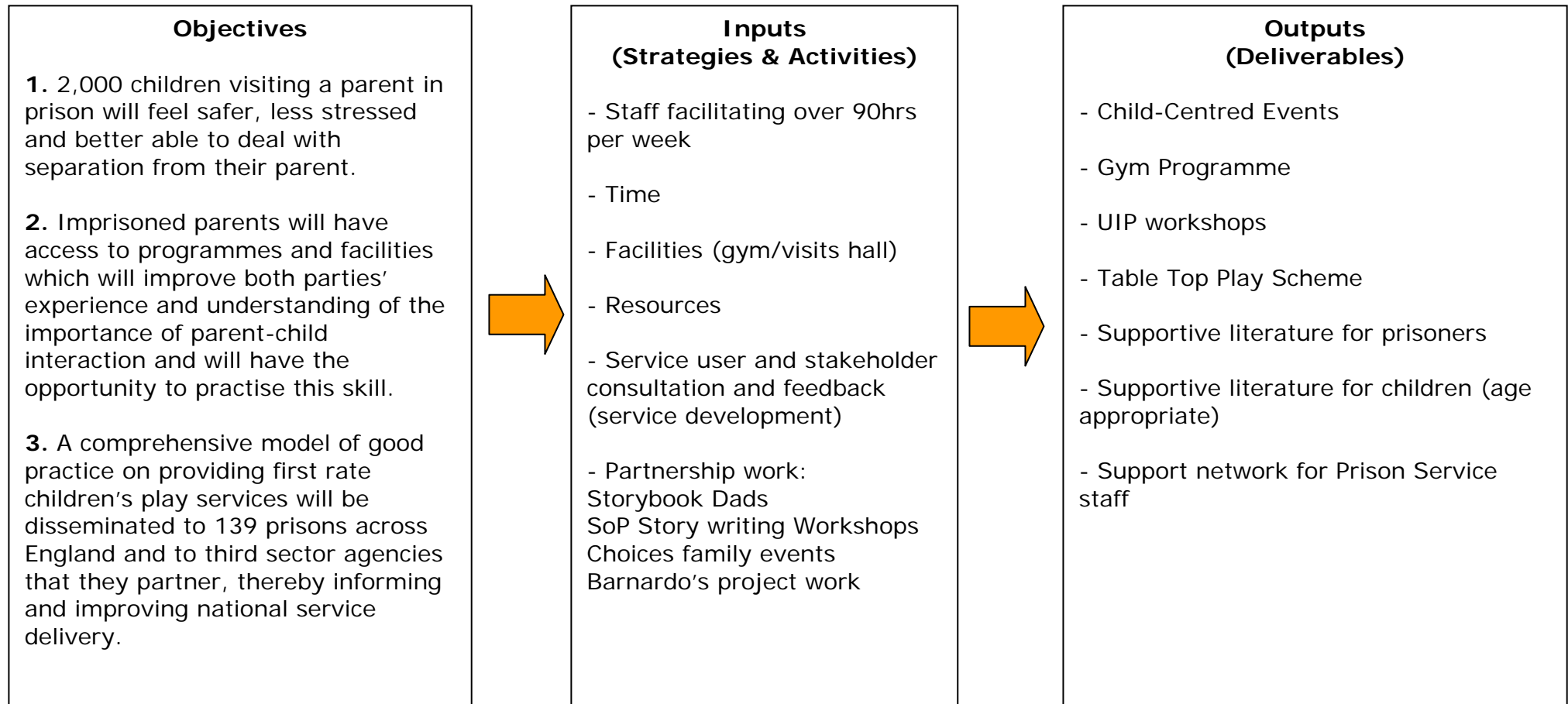
APPENDICES

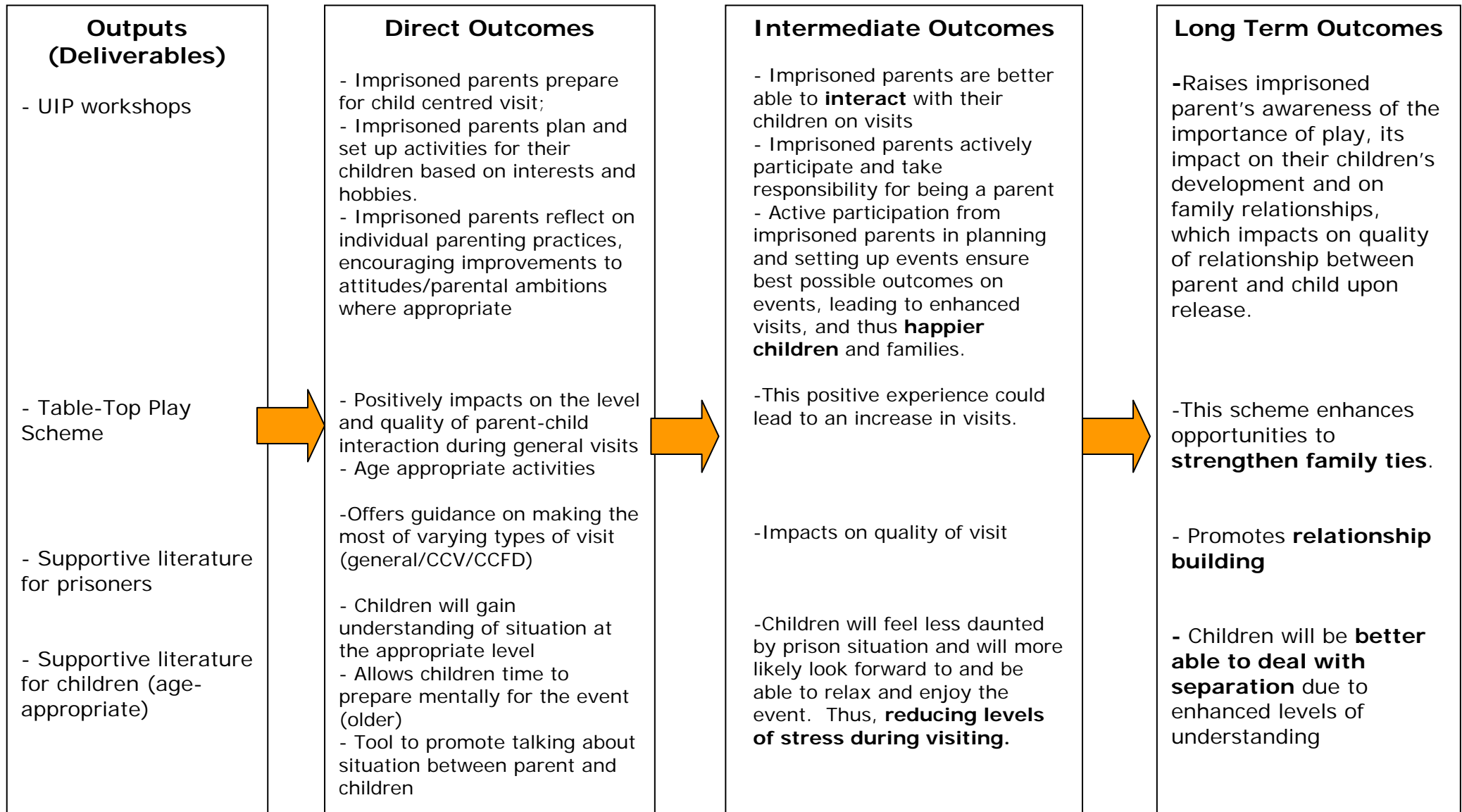
- Appendix 1:** Play in Prisons' Logic Model
- Appendix 2:** Analysis of progress towards Outcome 1
- Appendix 3:** Evaluation of events by participants;
- 3a.** Children
 - 3b.** Young people
 - 3c.** Imprisoned parents
 - 3d.** Parent/carers
- Appendix 4:** Analysis of Prisoner Interviews
- Appendix 5:** Analysis of Table Top Play Scheme
- Appendix 6:** Analysis of Understanding the Importance of Play Workshops

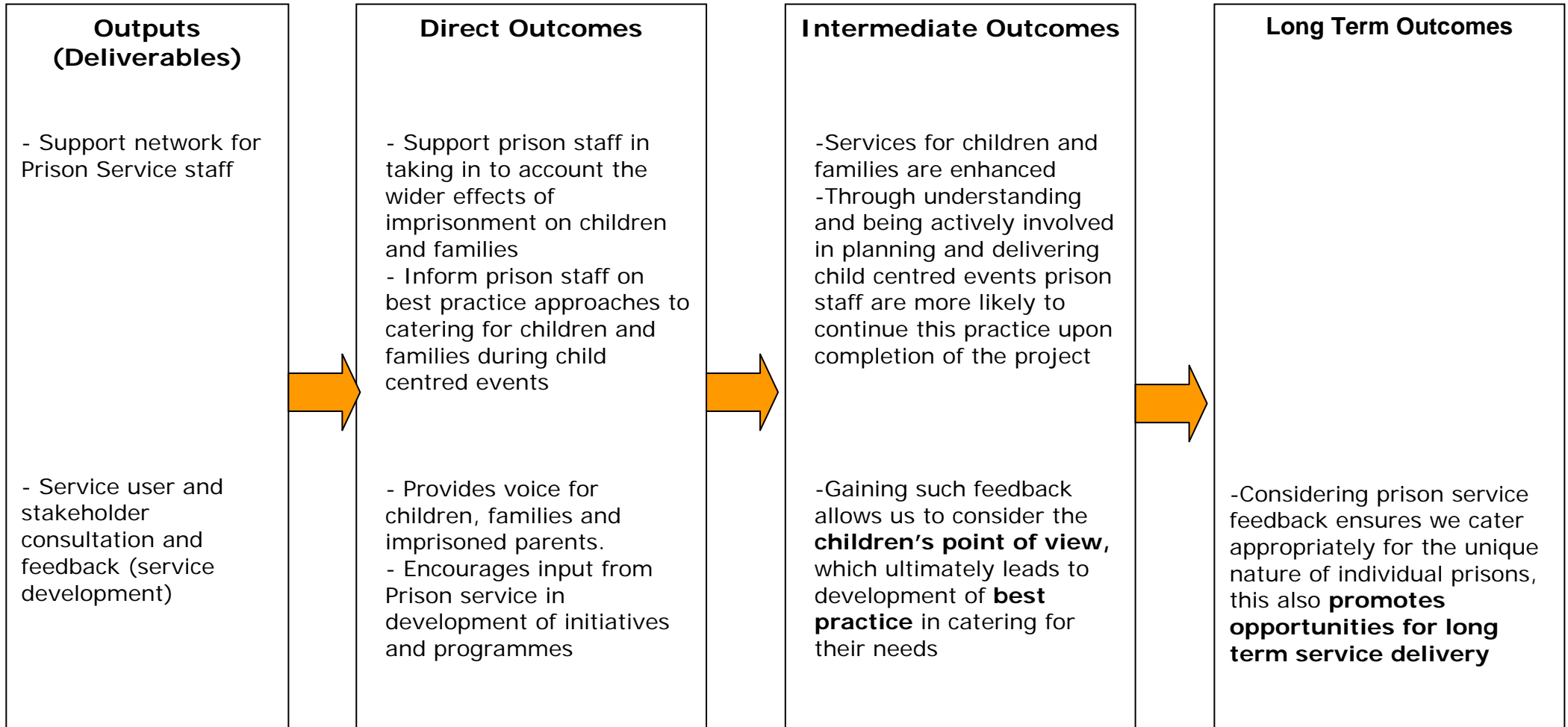
Appendix 1: Play in Prisons' Logic Model

Logic model = 'A pictorial representation of a project and the theory of change behind it'

PROJECT GOAL: Play in Prison's goal is to support and enhance parent-child relationships through the medium of play and interaction. Through doing this, we aim to reduce the negative effects of parental imprisonment, strengthen family ties, and ultimately reduce reoffending.







Appendix 2: Analysis of progress towards Outcome 1

Outcome 1 states: By the end of three years over 2,000 children visiting a parent in prison will feel safer, less stressed and better able to deal with separation from their parent.

Nearly all parent/carers consulted (more than 90%) felt that participating in PiP helped make their children feel less stressed and more relaxed.

We consulted 92 parent/carers to find out if we were meeting the Outcome 1 target. Along with the specific statistics, an analysis of why the parents came to the conclusions they did is offered below. We also consulted children; their views will be discussed in detail in Appendix 3a.

1. In your opinion has this event helped your child/ren feel **less stressed** compared to a general visit?

	Yes	Don't know	No
Channings Wood	94%	0%	6%
Dartmoor	92%	4%	4%
Exeter	88%	9%	3%
Average	92%	4%	4%

2. Do you think your child/ren have been **more relaxed** during this visit compared to a general visit?

	Yes	Don't know	No
CW	94%	3%	3%
Dartmoor	92%	8%	0%
Exeter	91%	3%	6%
Average	92%	5%	3%

3. After experiencing this event do you feel that your children may be **better able to deal with separation** from their imprisoned parent?

	Yes	Don't know	No
CW	61%	27%	12%
Dartmoor	63%	17%	21%
Exeter	52%	27%	21%
Average	59%	24%	17%

Why do children involved with Play in Prisons feel **less stressed** and **more relaxed**?

Parents offered a variety of reasons when considering why PiP makes a difference to children visiting prisons. An unweighted average of 92% felt their children were less stressed and felt they were more relaxed when participating in a PiP event compared to a general domestic visit. From these responses, a number of common themes emerged. When considering why children feel 'less stressed' and 'more relaxed' three main themes were identified.

✓ **Freedom and movement**

PiP child centred events allow free movement of prisoners. During general domestic visits, prisoners are not permitted to move from their chairs once seated. Many respondents reported that the free movement allowed on our events dramatically enhanced the overall visiting experience on offer.

Freedom of movement allows families to behave like families again and provides far more opportunities for prisoners to engage with their children in a natural manner, at their level, doing the things that their children want to do.

Many parent/carers reported that their children find restricted movement very confusing and upsetting, especially the younger children, who find the prison environment harder to understand and make sense of. During our events, prisoners are free to tend to their children if they fall over, or if they call them for help when playing, they are given the opportunity to behave like fathers again and show their children that they care, both through their words and their physical actions.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme:

- In response to question one: "Yes, because they could take their dad away from the table and play games, also they could play without having to worry that their dad couldn't go and see" (parent/carer, Oct '10)
- As above: "Yes, because it gives us the freedom to play and express ourselves" (prisoner, Apr '10)
- In response to 'Tell us something important about today': "that my dad came and did stuff with me" (child, Oct '10)
- In response to 'What was the best bit about today?': "Spending all my time with my daddy" (child, Feb '11)
- General comment: "It has really made a difference, normal visits are nice but this is so much better. It's meant a lot, to have my partner just out of his seat walking around, playing with the children has made the day" (parent/carer, Jun '11)

✓ **Play, activities and opportunities for interaction**

PiP child-centred events provide a variety of quality play activities and we do our best to cater for all ages and stages of development. All the activities are designed to promote conversation, working together and having fun, in order to build upon and strengthen relationships between imprisoned parents and their children. There is an

emphasis on parental involvement and this is generally very well received by all involved.

Parent/carers indicated that the play opportunities, variety of activities and resources, and the opportunities for meaningful interaction these provide, all lead to the children participating in our events feeling less stressed and more relaxed. Many of our activities result in the parent or child making something to give to one another. These small gestures go a long way to building bridges and providing positive memories for the families who take part in our events.

Parent/carers also indicated that another major factor in affecting the opportunities for quality play and interaction is the innovative use of the prison gymnasiums. This programme was initially set up to meet the needs of older children; however, it has proven to be valuable for all age groups when used to its full potential. This assumption has been supported by positive feedback given by all family members. The change of environment allows a different type of interaction to take place, where children can run around unrestricted and let off steam, play rough and tumble with their father, play badminton, or build dens together out of big boxes and material. The gymnasium environment allows for a more natural and fun way of interacting with one another.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme;

- In response to question one: "Yes, because I get to play and have lots of fun with my dad, but with a normal visit he can not move from his seat and have any fun at all" (Young Person, Apr '10)
- In response to 'What was the best bit about today?': "Spending time in the gym. It's been a long time since we have had so much fun together" (Young Person, Apr '09)
- As above: "The gym...it was so good I forgot we were in prison (Young Person, Apr' 09)
- As above: "Playing together and making all my family happy" (Child, Jan '11)

✓ **'Normal'/Relaxed environment**

During PiP child-centred events, everything possible is done to minimise the feeling of 'being in prison' for the children attending. This is achieved by:

- ✓ Unrestricted movement
- ✓ Prisoners not wearing 'bibs'
- ✓ Play and activities set up using the whole environment rather than restricted to the prison play area
- ✓ Visiting the gymnasium
- ✓ Prison officers are encouraged to portray a more relaxed and friendly approach to children and families
- ✓ Providing the opportunity to share a family meal together at lunch time and trying to ensure the catering is child-friendly.

This theme is repeated again and again by parent/carers who feel the normal and relaxed environment affects their children's ability to relax and enjoy their day within the prison.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme:

- General comment: "A happy and normal few hours of great interaction with daddy and children" (parent/carer, May '11)
- General comment: "It was a real nice special day, where we could be ourselves and be able to have dinner and walk around with them, really looking forward to the next one" (parent/carer, Apr '11)
- In response to question one: "Yes, I preferred visiting today as it was a much happier atmosphere as everyone seems more relaxed and as a family rather than a formal occasion" (Young Person, Oct '10)
- In response to 'Sum up your thoughts': "The whole atmosphere was friendly and enjoyable. Nice to be seen and treated as a family again" (Prisoner, Apr '09)

Other contributing factors

Whilst the three themes discussed above were the most common aspects of PiP that parent/carers contributed to their children's positive experiences, there were a number of other contributing factors. Each of the items below were also cited as reasons parents and carers believe that their children were less stressed and more relaxed.

- **Longer visit** – Our events last between four and five hours, compared to a general visit, which lasts a maximum of two hours. The additional time together provides more time to settle down, bond and get to know one another again.
- **Less people** – We ensure that far less children and families attend our events in comparison to general domestic visits. This allows a smoother and quicker entry in to the prison, less competition for space, more opportunities for personal time between families without interruptions, and generally a more relaxed atmosphere.
- **Opportunities for physical contact** – with free movement and use of the prison gymnasium, we provide more opportunities for children and parents to show each other they care about and love one another physically, by giving cuddles, sitting on laps, holding hands, playing rough and tumble and generally having the freedom to behave 'as normally' as possible.
- **Friendly staff** – PiP staff, as well as supporting agency staff, are all trained and experienced in working with children and families. They are approachable, friendly and offer sensitive support and advice where appropriate. Prison staff that work on our events generally choose to support us and so have an interest in supporting our service users.

What reasons did parent/carers give when responding ‘Don’t know’ or ‘No’ when asked whether PiP had helped their children feel less stressed and more relaxed?

Between 4% and 5% of parent/carers did not know whether PiP had made a difference to their children’s levels of stress and ability to relax. And only 3-4% thought that PiP had not made a difference to their children’s levels of stress or ability to relax. The main reason stated was the fact that they felt their child/ren were too young to know where they were or what was going on. Other reasons included the children coping well under normal visiting situations and not being stressed in the first place, and that no matter what we do they are still entering a prison environment.

Why are children involved with Play in Prisons better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent?

Being ‘better able to deal with separation’ was a difficult concept for the parent/carers to quantify as a definite ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ response. However, out of our sample, 59% of respondents felt that their children were better able to deal with the separation. When asked why they thought this was the case, four clear themes emerged from the findings.

✓ Quality time

Respondents reported that the quality of the time the children were able to spend with their imprisoned parents made a difference in their ability to cope with the separation. PiP child-centred events aim to provide quality and meaningful experiences and interactions where relationships can be sustained and built upon. Under general domestic visiting conditions, the ability to engage between child and parent is affected by the alien and restrictive environment that they find themselves in. PiP aims to reduce these barriers in order to provide the best possible opportunities to maintain the essential parent-child bond.

Below is an example of feedback to support the above theme;

- In response to question one: “Yes, it was absolutely priceless for my son to be able to play with his dad for the first time in two years. I think having quality time like today will make it a lot easier for their relationship to go back to normal on release” (Parent/carer, Feb ‘10)

✓ Relaxed environment

Respondents stated that the relaxed environment impacted on their children’s ability to cope with the separation. Reiterating what has already been said, through providing a relaxed environment, we aim to provide an atmosphere where parents and children can engage naturally with one another. By doing this, we hope that they will be better able to maintain and build upon their relationship, which in turn may provide them with a more secure attachment and thus help them to cope with the separation.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme;

- In response to question two: “Yes, so much more relaxed and less formal than a normal visit. Also, we weren’t rushed and often when visiting myself and my son end up competing for his dad’s time” (Feb ‘10)
- In response to the question: “The children being able to interact with their daddy in a normal relaxed way does them the world of good” (Apr ‘10)

✓ **Something to look forward to**

Many respondents reported that providing their children with something to look forward to supported their children in coping with the separation from their imprisoned parent.

✓ **Regular contact**

Although PiP child-centred events only take place during school holidays, respondents felt that the PiP programme of events gave their children the opportunity to spend quality time with their parent which allowed them to maintain their bond, and thus supported them through the separation from their parent.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme:

- In response to question 3: "Yes, it's not just the separation, but also coming home. The more time he gets to spend with his dad, the easier it will be for him to adjust when he comes home next month" (Parent/carer, Aug '10)
- As above: "Yes, I think it will be easier to cope knowing that my dad will be ok" (Young Person, Oct '10)

What reasons did parent/carers give when responding 'Don't know' or 'No' when asked whether their children were better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent?

Almost a quarter (24%) of respondents decided that they didn't know whether their children would be better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent as a direct result of PiP. A total of 17% told us that their children would not be better able to cope with the separation. As discussed previously, the concept of being 'better able to deal with separation' is a challenging one to assess, and we must remember that our project provides single-day experiences for children and families. Children must then go home and continue life without their father and we should not assume that our work solves everything. Three main themes emerged when looking at why parents/carers had come to this conclusion.

✓ **Children are too young**

The majority of parent/carers who responded that they didn't know if their children 'were better able to deal with the separation' had very young children. For this reason they felt they were unable to comment on what effect PiP had on their ability to cope.

✓ **More visits needed**

The regular contact that PiP provides was a theme for why parent/carers thought their children *were* better able to cope with separation. However, a number of respondents also reported that more visits were required in order to have an effect.

✓ **Dad doesn't come home at the end of the day**

This theme was common in that many respondents agreed that PiP helped make the situation more bearable for their children and may help them cope better, but the fact that their father remained locked away at the end of the day would remain.

Appendix 3a: Evaluation of events by Children (under 10)

From a sample size of 103 children (aged 10 years and under), almost all children consulted (99%) stated that they enjoyed participating in Play in Prisons. Along with the specific statistics, an analysis of why the children came to the conclusions they did is offered below.

HMP Channings Wood	Yes	Don't know	No
Did you enjoy today?	100%	0%	0%
Did you enjoy the activities?	100%	0%	0%

HMP Dartmoor	Yes	Don't know	No
Did you enjoy today?	100%	0%	0%
Did you enjoy the activities?	96%	4%	0%

HMP Exeter	Yes	Don't know	No
Did you enjoy today?	96%	4%	0%
Did you enjoy the activities?	92%	8%	0%

UNWEIGHTED AVERAGE (all 3 prisons)	Yes	Don't know	No
Did you enjoy today?	99%	1%	0%
Did you enjoy the activities?	96%	4%	0%

What did children like best about their experience of Play in Prisons?

With an average of 99% of children reporting that they enjoyed their day, we can safely draw conclusions about whether they felt safe and whether they found the experience stressful. There are elements of the day which are out of control, such as entering the prison gates and the dog searches on arrival, which may cause anxiety initially. However, our data provides evidence that overall, the experiences on offer are enjoyable and fun. We can therefore presume that children will feel less stressed and more relaxed during our events when compared to a normal domestic visit. When asked what the children liked best about their day, the same themes emerged across all three prisons. Four themes are identified below.

✓ **Spending time with my Dad**

Unsurprisingly, the most common response to this question was that they just enjoyed spending time with their dad. As discussed previously, the PiP child-centred events allow a considerable amount of time as a family compared to a general domestic visit and it would seem this opportunity is valued by the children just as much as the parents and carers. The quality of this time is considered in the themes below.

✓ **Being able to play with my dad**

Although this may seem like a similar response to the above, this theme specifically addresses the ability to 'play' with their fathers. The freedom and movement that our events offer ensure that the parents and children have the opportunity to play together, and allow the children to take the lead in what is normally a very controlled environment. It would seem that the ability to play with their fathers in a more child-centred environment is key to the children's enjoyment.

✓ **Activities**

Leading on from the above, the activities provided by PiP were also reported as the 'best' part of the day. As discussed previously, the activities are designed and intended to cater for a wide age range and level of abilities. PiP always aims to ensure a variety of interests are provided for and all the activities are free choice. Parental participation is strongly encouraged and activities are designed to promote conversations, working together and having a common goal or interest. The most popular activities that were specifically commented upon were either of a creative or physical (gym based) nature.

✓ **Gymnasium programme**

A key element reported by many children in making the day enjoyable is the opportunity to use the gym facilities within the prisons. Although this programme only exists as a permanent feature in HMP Dartmoor and Exeter, HMP Channings Wood have delivered a number of one-off gym events and hope to develop this programme in the future. The gymnasiums at both prisons have invested in child-centred equipment and resources and the prison gym teams are highly committed to the programme. This has led to a very successful partnership where children and families are offered the best possible opportunities to have fun and 'be normal' again. Children, particularly older children and boys, reported positively on the physical games they are able to play with their fathers. This programme has added a new dynamic to visits and its success in providing quality family interaction cannot be underestimated.

Appendix 3b: Evaluation of events by Young People (10+ years)

On overwhelming majority of young people we consulted claimed that they felt less stressed or more relaxed on a PiP event in comparison to a general visit. We asked young people for their feedback in two formats. We wanted to know young peoples general views about the project, but we also felt that many were old enough to consider the impact of PiP in relation to Outcome 1. From a total sample size of 43 young people the following results were recorded.

In your opinion has this event helped you feel **less stressed** compared to a general visit?

	Yes	Don't know	No
Unweighted Average (all 3 prisons)	89%	11%	0%

Do you think you have been **more relaxed** during this visit compared to a general visit?

	Yes	Don't know	No
Unweighted Average (all 3 prisons)	86%	14%	0%

After experiencing this event do you feel that you may be **better able to deal with separation** from your imprisoned parent?

	Yes	Don't know	No
Unweighted Average (all 3 prisons)	49%	28%	23%

Why do young people involved with Play in Prisons feel **less stressed** and **more relaxed**?

An average of 89% of young people felt they were less stressed and 86% felt they were more relaxed when participating in a PiP event compared to a general domestic visit. These are slightly lower than the parent/carer results; however, we must remember that the parent/carer respondents were considering a wider age group, many of whom were younger than the young people we have consulted. It is important to recognise that young people will have a far greater understanding of the family situation and the consequences of their parent's imprisonment; this may be one of the reasons for the slightly lower ratings. From the responses recorded, a number of common themes emerged. These themes were almost identical to the themes from the parent/carer feedback. Considering the themes have already been analysed and discussed in the parent/carer section, and in order to avoid duplication, only a brief list will be provided here. The themes were as follows:

- ✓ **Freedom and movement**
- ✓ **Play, activities and opportunities for interaction**
- ✓ **'Normal'/Relaxed environment**

Other contributing factors (listed below) which were highlighted by young people were again, very similar to the parent/carer results.

- **Gym programme**
- **Longer visit**
- **Friendly staff/not as strict**
- **The ability to have fun together**

The fact that the results of both the parent/carers and the young people's consultations were so similar is reassuring. The similarity provides us with evidence that there are three or four very key aspects to our work that enhance experiences for children and families. With such concrete evidence of what works, we have a strong foundation for others to replicate in order to improve their programmes and services for children and families.

What reasons did young people give when responding 'Don't know' when asked whether PiP had helped them feel less stressed and more relaxed?

Between 11% and 14% of young people did not know whether PiP had made a difference to their levels of stress and ability to relax and no one claimed that PiP had no effect on their levels of stress or ability to relax. The main reason stated for not knowing, was the fact that they had not attended a visit before and so felt that they did not know how they would feel after having attended a general domestic visit in comparison to a PiP event.

Why are young people involved with Play in Prisons better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent?

The concept of being 'better able to deal with separation' proved to be a difficult concept for the young people to quantify as a definite 'Yes' or 'No' response. This was also the case with parent/carer responses. However, out of our sample, 49% of respondents felt that they were better able to deal with the separation. When asked why they thought this was the case, the themes which emerged, again, followed the same themes as the parent/carers assigned. As these themes have been discussed in the previous 'outcome 1' section, only a brief list will be provided below.

- ✓ **Quality time**
- ✓ **Relaxed environment**
- ✓ **Something to look forward to**
- ✓ **Less people and longer visit**

What reasons did young people give when responding 'Don't know' or 'No' when asked whether their children were better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent?

Overall, 28% of young people told us that they didn't know whether they were better able to deal with being separated from their imprisoned parent as a direct result of PiP. Almost one quarter (23%) decided that they would not be better able to cope with the separation. As discussed previously, the concept of being 'better able to deal with separation' is a challenging one to assess, and we must remember that our project provides one day experiences for children and families. Children and young people must then go home and continue life without their father and we should not assume that our work solves everything. Two main themes emerged when looking at why young people had come to this conclusion.

✓ 'I'm already used to it'

Some young people, who decided that PiP didn't make a difference to their ability to cope with separation, reported that they were already 'used' to their fathers' being in prison. In claiming this, we might assume that they have been able to build their own coping mechanisms for dealing with the separation from their imprisoned parent. We hope however, that PiP may have assisted in this process in some way. The same young people reported that although it didn't make a difference to them (because they were already used to it), it would help other young people in their situation.

✓ 'I'll miss my Dad no matter what'

Young people felt that although PiP was making a difference by allowing them to spend quality time with their dads, the fact still remained that they would miss their fathers' for the duration of their sentence.

General Feedback from Young People

AVERAGE (all 3 prisons)	1 ☹️	2	3	4	5 😊
Did you enjoy today?	-	-	-	12%	88%
Do you think your parents enjoyed today?	-	-	-	24%	76%

From the above table we can see that 100% of young people enjoyed participating in the PiP project, and they also believed that their parents did too.

What did young people enjoy most about their Play in Prison experience?

With 100% of young people reporting that they enjoyed their day, our data provides evidence that overall, the experiences offered to young people and their parents are worthwhile, enjoyable and fun. When asked what the young people enjoyed most about their day, the same themes emerged across all three prisons, which also correspond with the themes of the younger children consultation results. The four themes are identified below.

- ✓ Spending time with my Dad
- ✓ Freedom and Movement
- ✓ Activities
- ✓ Gymnasium programme

Appendix 3c: Evaluation of events by Imprisoned Parents

From a sample size of 98 imprisoned fathers, the overwhelming majority (99%) stated that they enjoyed participating in Play in Prisons. Every one of the fathers (from the same sample) felt that their children enjoyed being part of the project. Along with the specific statistics, an analysis of why the prisoners came to the conclusions they did is offered below.

HMP Channing's Wood	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	-	-	6%	94%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	3%	97%

HMP Dartmoor	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	3%	3%	16%	78%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	13%	87%

HMP Exeter	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	-	-	11%	89%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	-	100%

UNWEIGHTED AVERAGE (all 3 prisons)	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	1%	1%	11%	87%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	5%	95%

What did imprisoned parents enjoy most about their experience of Play in Prisons?

With an average of 98% of imprisoned parents reporting that they enjoyed their experience of Play in Prisons, we may begin to draw some conclusions about PiP's effectiveness in supporting parent-child relationships. Although we are concentrating on levels of enjoyment, it is important to remember the impact this will have on the ability to interact positively with one another and build relationships. With such a high level of both children and imprisoned parents reporting that they 'enjoyed themselves', we can assume that we provide an atmosphere where relationships and interaction are promoted and enhanced.

When asked what imprisoned parents enjoyed most about their day, the same themes emerged across all three prisons, and again corresponded with both younger children's, and young people's perspectives. The four main themes are identified below.

✓ **Spending time with my children**

Unsurprisingly, as with the children/young people's responses, the most common response to this question was that the prisoners enjoyed spending time with their children. Further discussion around this point can be found in previous sections. It is important to note that the feedback at HMP Channings Wood differed slightly from the other two prisons, in that prisoners referred specifically to the 1:1 time they were able to spend with their children. HMP Channings Wood is the only PiP prison which provides a 'dads only' session, where imprisoned fathers and their children have the opportunity to spend around an hour together.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme:

- In response to 'What has today meant to you?': "Today has meant so much to me as I have been able to bond as a proper dad. Haven't done that since I was sentenced. It has been perfect. Thank you." (Prisoner, May '11)
- As above: "A lot, I hadn't even spoken to my son properly or seen him in more than six months. So today was priceless...it has meant that I can bond with my son which is invaluable." (Prisoner, May '11)
- As above: "Priceless. The quality of time with the children is irreplaceable... It's the next best thing you can be on while in jail apart from ROTL's. The time spent with the family is priceless" (Prisoner, Jun '11)

✓ **Freedom and Movement**

As discussed previously, the ability to move freely appears to have had a profound effect on all our service users. This is illustrated by all sample groups highlighting freedom and movement as an important factor in their day.

✓ **Activities and play**

As well as the ability to move freely in a more relaxed environment, the prisoners also highlighted the opportunities for play and the activities on offer as an element of the day which made the time they spend with their children more enjoyable. Further discussion around this topic has taken place in previous sections of the report.

✓ **Gymnasium programme**

As with all other sample groups, the gymnasium programme is reported to be a key factor in the successful delivery of the day.

Other contributing factors

- **Spending time as a whole family** – Although prisoners have the opportunity to see their family on general domestic visits, the opportunity to spend time together in an unrestricted and more 'normalised' environment on PiP events is considered to be another contributing factor to the enjoyment of the day.
- **Having lunch together** – Prisoners felt that the opportunity to share a meal together with their family was a highlight of their day. This is something that the prisoners would not experience during other types of visit.
- **Longer visit** – As reported previously, the extended nature of PiP visits is also considered a factor when considering the enjoyment experienced by all family members.

How would imprisoned parents like to improve PiP events?

When asked if the prisoners could think of ways of making the day even better the main consensus was 'No'. However, 3 main areas of improvement were highlighted based on the prisoners responses (listed below).

- ✓ **Longer visit** – Although the longer visits that PiP offers is considered to be one of the advantages for children and families, many prisoners requested that the visits were even longer. When reflecting on this request, it seems natural that imprisoned parents, who are separated from their families for long periods of time would of course want to see them for as long as physically possible. However, there a number of factors to consider when planning the length of the events. Many families have to travel long distances in order to visit the prisoner, this means that it is impractical to start an event too early in the morning, as we need to allow for travelling time. Also, when working with young children, it is important to consider how tiring such an event is. Many children will not cope with a visit longer than four to five hours due to the physical and emotional demands placed on them. As well as the above, prison regime dictates timings.
- ✓ **No general visit at the end of a PiP event** – At both HMP Channings Wood and HMP Dartmoor the prison requires that a general domestic visit routine continues in order that the maximum number of prisoners receive a visit. This means that a general visit takes place immediately after our PiP event has come to an end. This leads to confusion for young children and frustration for the rest of the family, as general visit procedures are put back in to place. Restricted movement is reinstated and bibs must be worn by all prisoners. This is an issue that we have raised with the prisons. Both are working hard to find a solution.
- ✓ **Opportunities to play outside** – A number of prisoners requested an opportunity to play outside with their children in good weather. We have raised this request with the prisons. In both HMP Dartmoor and HMP Exeter we have been advised that there is no space within the prison compound that would be suitable for children and families use. This is because they are traditionally built prisons with no outdoor space that is not overlooked by living blocks or wings. However, HMP Channings Wood has ample outdoor space and is open to the idea of developing this service during the summer months. We are hopeful that this will be possible prior to the end of the project.

Appendix 3d: Evaluation of events by Parents and Carers

From a sample size of 48 parent/carers, 100% stated that they enjoyed participating in Play in Prisons. From the same sample, every single parent and carer felt that their children enjoyed being part of the project. Along with the specific statistics, an analysis of why the parent/carers came to the conclusions they did is offered below.

HMP Channings Wood	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	-	-	11%	89%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	-	100%

HMP Dartmoor	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?	-	-	-	9%	91%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?	-	-	-	4%	96%

HMP Exeter	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?				6%	94%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?				6%	94%

UNWEIGHTED AVERAGE (all 3 prisons)	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺
Did you enjoy today?				9%	91%
Do you think your children enjoyed today?				3%	97%

What did parent/carers enjoy most about their experience of Play in Prisons?

All parents and carers reported that they enjoyed their experience of Play in Prisons. When asked what they enjoyed most about their day, the same themes emerged across all three prisons, and again corresponded with the views of younger children's, young people's and imprisoned parents perspectives. The four main themes are identified below.

✓ Being together

Although slightly different in phrasing, this theme correlates directly with the prisoner theme of spending time with the children, and children and young peoples theme of spending time with one another. It is interesting to note that the parent/carers are more concerned about the time spent as a whole family rather than with individual family members. The theme below also relates to 'being together'.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme;

- In response to: 'What has today meant to your family?': "It brought my daughter closer to her dad as she had longer with him than usual. She's really chuffed." (Parent/carer, Feb 2011)
- As above: "Togetherness" (Parent/carer, Feb 2011)

✓ **Seeing dads and children play together**

Many parent/carers, as well as stating that it was the 'being together' that made their experience most enjoyable, claimed that seeing the children and their fathers play together was a contributing factor. Without family days, this is something that would not be experienced during a parent's prison sentence. The freedom and movement that our events afford the families means that parents/carers and partners of incarcerated parents can enjoy a sense of normality. Parents/carers often comment that the event provides them with reassurance that the imprisoned parent can still be a father and that the relationship has not completely broken down. This is harder to sense on a general domestic visit.

Below are some feedback examples to support the above theme;

- As above: "It has been nice watching the children play and have constant smiles with their dad" (Parent/carer, Jan 2011)
- As above: "It has brought the family back together, feels amazing to see dad and daughter so happy together" (Parent/carer, Apr 2011)

✓ **Gymnasium programme**

As with all other sample groups, the gymnasium programme is reported to be a key factor in the successful delivery of the day.

✓ **Activities and play**

Parent/carers, as with all other service user groups, commented upon the positive impact that the PiP activities had on their experience. Further discussion around this topic has taken place in previous sections of the report.

Other contributing factors

- **Freedom and movement**
- **Relaxed atmosphere**
- **Having lunch together**

How would visiting parent/carers like to improve PiP events?

When asked if the parent/carers could think of ways of making the day even better the most popular responses followed the same themes as the prisoner's suggestions. The three main areas of improvement highlighted by the respondents are listed below. Further discussion on each theme can be found in the prisoner feedback section.

- ✓ **No general visit at the end of a PiP event**
- ✓ **Longer visit**
- ✓ **Opportunities to play outside**

Appendix 4: Analysis of Prisoner Interviews

As part of the final evaluation process, Play in Prisons required an in-depth insight into the impact the project has had on imprisoned parents and the relationships they have with their children. In order to achieve this we carried out a number of semi-structured interviews with prisoners who had attended a minimum of two of our events.

Nine prisoners were interviewed, so we can not use our findings to display any kind of significant statistical data. However, we can draw upon the experiences offered by the participants to highlight how the project has affected individuals on a more personal level.

Overwhelmingly, the prisoners we spoke to felt PIP enhanced the visiting experience for both them and their children. As a result, they felt better able to interact with their children, develop stronger relationships and felt better about resettling back into family life upon release.

WHO WE SPOKE TO

Prisoners interviewed ranged in age from 27 to 45 years old and their sentences varied from 3 to 9 years in duration. The prisoners fathered between one and five children each and their children ranged in age from under one to 18 years old. The amount of events attended per prisoner ranged from two to 12, with the majority attending 5 or more events and an average of six events each. The participants were imprisoned at HMP Channings Wood and Dartmoor. We were unable to carry out interviews at HMP Exeter as the prison was not able to facilitate the interview process due to staff shortages.

WHAT WE ASKED

We asked all the prisoners the same questions, but allowed room for open discussion to take place in between each question. This resulted in gaining data that could be compared from one prisoner to another, but also provided an opportunity to find out what individual prisoners wanted to tell us about their unique experience of Play in Prisons. The questions were asked in the form of statements. The participant then had to decide on a scale from 1-5 the extent to which he agreed or disagreed with the statement.

Listed below are the statements which will be analysed within this section of the report.

Q#	Statement
1	My child/ren appear to feel less stressed or more relaxed when attending a Child Centred Visit compared to a General Visit
2	I feel my child may be better able to deal with being separated from me having participated in the PiP project
3	The PiP project allows me to interact more positively with my child/ren
4	Through the PiP project, I feel I have a better understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction
5	My relationship with my child/ren has been enhanced through the PiP project

6	Access to the gym programme has given us opportunities to build our relationship that the visits hall does not
7	The PiP leaflets for prisoners have helped me make the most of the time I get to spend with my child/ren
8	I am aware of the Table Top Play Scheme
9	The Table Top Play Scheme has enhanced the time I spend with my child/ren on General Visits
10	I think the PiP project will help make rejoining family life upon release a little easier

WHAT THEY TOLD US

Below we will consider each individual statement, analysing responses and drawing conclusions as to how successful Play in Prisons has been in providing opportunities to improve both parties' (children and imprisoned parents) experience and understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction. The analysis in this section therefore refers directly to project Outcome 2.

Stress and Separation

- All prisoners strongly agreed that their children were less stressed and more relaxed when engaging with the PiP project
- 7/9 prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that their children were better able to deal with being separated from them through their participation in PiP

The reasons the prisoners offered for the reduction in their children's stress levels and whether they were better able to deal with separation matched those discussed in Appendix 2. This correlation in results, again, indicates that the success of the project has been dependent on only a few very basic, but effective concepts (see Appendix 2 for further discussion).

When asked how the prisoners knew their children were less stressed, they commented upon their children's expression; "The look on his face...just delight!", how they appeared "happier", that they were more physically active, and that they were talking and interacting more with their parents. When asked why he thought his children were less stressed, one parent commented; "Because there is more freedom...more chance to physically interact...the atmosphere is more relaxed and there is more time to communicate on a deeper, more emotional level."

When considering prisoner's thoughts on why they felt their children were better able to cope with being separated (in addition to those responses that matched Outcome One), one prisoner commented that Play in Prisons has "made the sentence easier for all the family" and that "...it's the only sense of normality that I have with my children. The **pact** days are the only little bit that we have all got left." Another focused on the 'quality time' that our events offer, stating "its about the quality time, it gives them a feeling of being in touch that a general visit doesn't". One prisoner commented on how "you can get up and do things, and so they're (children) are at ease. It's more like home."

When considering why two imprisoned parents were unsure about whether their children were better able to deal with separation, the concept of 'not being on the outside to know' was discussed. These prisoners felt that although they knew that the PiP events supported their children when they were with them, they could not comment on how that then impacted on how they feel at home. Both imprisoned parents had children under the age of five, which may have influenced their decision, as it is harder for younger children to express how they feel in such complex situations.

Interaction and Relationships

- All prisoners strongly agreed that PiP allowed them to interact more positively with their children
- Seven out of nine prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that they have a better understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction through their involvement with PiP
- Eight out of nine strongly agreed that the gym programme offers them opportunities to build relationships with their children that the visits hall does not

We can see from the evidence above (and throughout this report) that our events enhance and support interaction and relationship building between imprisoned parents and their children. The responses gained from these interviews again echoed those received in our event feedback. However, the prisoners were able to offer deeper insight into why their relationships and interactions have been so greatly enhanced.

The notion of being able to 'deal with the situation' was discussed, where fathers feel empowered by their unrestricted movement and freedom. The prisoners are able to behave like 'normal' fathers for a few hours and this impacts dramatically on their ability to interact with their children. A prisoner gives an example; "I can be more positive with her. If she runs off to the play area (on a general visit), I can't do that. I can't deal with the situation." Another prisoner commented that he is able to be involved in his child's hobby (trains) through taking part in our events. This is normally impossible as he can not get on the floor to play with the train tracks at any other time. This has allowed his father to display an interest in his son's life and in turn will allow the child to feel a sense of pride and importance, which he would not normally experience with his father. Another prisoner explained that the events offer the family the opportunity to "do really good things, things that you wouldn't even do on the outside". Again, this emphasises the role that PiP has in offering opportunities to enhance and support parent-child interaction. These opportunities are bettered still by the gym programme that has been developed in HMPs Dartmoor and Exeter (discussed in detail in event feedback analysis).

Through regularly participating in our events and through attending the preparatory workshops (UIP) that we have developed, prisoners are better able to understand the importance of parent-child interaction, on more of a practical and meaningful sense rather than from a theoretical perspective. They are able to learn about the importance placed on them in affecting many areas of their children's development. The prisoner information leaflets we have produced emphasise their importance and offers advice on how they can make the most of their time with their children on visits. One prisoner commented; "**pact** visits have made me see how you can act in a more constructive way rather than just being there." Another comments "...these family visits have taught me not to be so materialistic, half an hour of play costs nothing". Another sums it up by explaining; "CCVs (child-centred visits) really make it stand out how much time we are losing out on. They contribute against that lost time."

Opportunities during General Visits

- Seven (out of nine) prisoners were aware of the Table-Top Play Scheme (TTPS)
- Six (out of nine) agreed or strongly agreed that the TTPS enhances the time with their children on general visits

Seven out of nine prisoners interviewed were aware of the TTPS, providing evidence that on the whole, the scheme is well promoted. However, there have been issues with the scheme running from time to time due to security concerns and this may explain why a minority of prisoners have not become aware of the scheme. Only one prisoner did not agree that the TTPS enhanced the time he spent with his child. He explained his four year old son was very interested in trains and although a train set is provided, the equipment needs to be used on the floor; therefore he has not made use of the scheme to date. He did, however, agree that the scheme was beneficial in its principles.

All other prisoners (who were aware of the scheme) positively commented upon its effectiveness in enhancing the time they spend with their children on general visits. One prisoner commented, "Instead of them going to the play area, having the TTPS means that we can sit at the table and do it. We can play as a family. We use it on every visit. How many other families actually sit down and play top trumps?" Another explains; "That's what they do all the time now...I'm reading them books and that, and that's just something I wouldn't be able to do before".

The prisoners explained that the scheme provided them with more quality time with their children as they are less inclined to leave the table and play in the play area. The play comes to them. Although the play areas are vital in providing a child-centred place for children to access during what can be a very stressful visiting atmosphere, the TTPS has offered families an alternative so that they can play and interact together. The scheme has enabled imprisoned fathers to become more involved in their children's interests and has provided many with a tool for interacting with their children. A prisoner with an 11 month old daughter commented on how none of his daughter's toys are permitted in the visits hall. These toys provide his little girl with a sense of security and help keep her entertained. He continues; "My Mrs can't bring them (toys) in the prison. The toys (TTPS) help me sit down and play with her. Without these toys there wouldn't be much interaction."

Refer to the TTPS section of this report for further analysis.

Resettlement

- All prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that their relationship with their children has been enhanced through PiP
- All prisoners strongly agreed that PiP will make rejoining family life upon release a little easier

The responses above provide clear evidence that prisoners who have engaged with PiP on a regular basis feel that their relationships with their children have been enhanced and because of this, they feel the transition back into family life upon release will be made easier. This evidence goes some way to supporting the notion that PiP may be decreasing the likelihood of reoffending once released, as with enhanced relationships with their children, the fathers have a lot to lose if they are re-incarcerated. Some may decide that this is a risk they are no longer willing to take.

Through providing the best possible environment and facilities for positive parent-child interaction to occur, prisoners reported that they feel better able to bond with their children. This statement is supported by a prisoner who compared PiP visits to the normal domestic visits; "It (PiP) has helped make the whole experience less traumatic; to be able to have one-to-one time has enabled them (his children) to feel that they haven't lost contact with me completely. We're not reduced to the brief, sterile contact like on general visits".

Through creating a stronger bond, the prisoners reported they are more able to continue an on-going relationship with their children during their prison sentence. One prisoner, who entered prison when his daughter was very young commented; "I couldn't imagine having a relationship with my daughter without them" (referring to PiP events). Another comments on the positive memories that PiP offers, saying; "We're continuing an on-going relationship..., when I get out I can say 'remember when we did all those activities together'."

By providing opportunities to build ongoing and positive relationships PiP supports the whole family in preparing for the prisoners release and reintegration back into the family. This assumption is confirmed by a number of interview comments. One prisoner discussed his son's perception of him, saying; "It's (PiP) helped him (son) know that I'm someone who will be a big part of his life". The concept of the children still seeing the imprisoned parent as a 'father figure' was a common theme and prisoners felt that PiP provided enhanced opportunities for them to establish or re-establish this role. Another prisoner comments "With the visits, you're gradually getting back into the family. The visits are about a whole family thing... She (daughter) gets to see us as a three. She'll respect me as part of the family."

Another contributing factor towards preparation for release is the positive impact the PiP visits can have on the parent/carers perception of the imprisoned father. Our visits allow fathers to actively take responsibility and re-assert themselves as father figures. This experience can build up the lost confidence in the parent/carers perceptions of the imprisoned fathers abilities and priorities. A prisoner explains, 'It's easy for her (partner) to be angry with me for being in here, but her seeing what me and him (son) are like together in here makes it better. It builds bridges coming on these visits'. These positive experiences, although limited in frequency, provide opportunities to strengthen family ties for all the family, not just between the imprisoned parent and his children.

In summary, it is clear through analysing the interview findings, that PiP has the ability to build bridges and re-establish and strengthen relationships. This has been achieved through providing opportunities to spend quality time together as a family unit, as well as on a 1:1 level. PiP can therefore positively impact on the effective transition from imprisonment back into family life.

Appendix 5: Analysis of Table-Top Play Scheme

WHAT IS THE 'TABLE TOP PLAY SCHEME' (TTPS)?

In order to support children in feeling safer and less stressed when visiting a parent in prison during normal domestic visits, PiP developed a scheme that intends to compliment the general play area service and support parent-child interaction. The Table Top Play Scheme (TTPS) operates across all three prisons.

The scheme aims to improve the involvement of imprisoned fathers in their children's play during this restrictive visiting time, by creating a system where children may take equipment from the play area to the tables at which the imprisoned family member must remain seated. By allowing equipment back to the tables, the children and parents are able to spend more quality 'family time' together and the equipment provided encourages positive parent-child interaction. The equipment is stored in themed boxes and there are a number of themes to suit different ages and interests.

WHO WAS INVOLVED

Based on current monthly statistics, an average of approximately 500 children visit the three Devon prisons each month. The significant majority of these children visit during general domestic visits. This scheme has therefore had the opportunity to impact on many hundreds of children over the course of its delivery, although actual numbers have not been recorded due to the nature of the scheme and the way it is delivered.

107 observations of children and families using the TTPS have been carried out as part of the final evaluation process, with an average of thirty-six observations per prison. Observations were carried out by the Play in Prisons project workers and they were randomly selected based on who chose to use the scheme on specific observation sessions. As well as carrying out observations, we have also gathered written feedback from families. All observations were anonymous.

WHAT WE FOUND OUT

As discussed previously, general domestic visits are not conducive to spending quality family time together. The restrictive rules governing movement and physical contact, the amount of families visiting in one room and the limited amount of time spent together can be a stressful and daunting experience for all family members, specifically children. With this in mind, observers focussed on the impact of the TTPS based on levels of interaction and the types of body language exhibited amongst family members.

Observation findings indicate that the scheme has provided opportunities for enhanced interactions and has provided many families with a sense of enjoyment and 'togetherness' during general visits. Key indicators from the types of body language and communication observed included:

- Eye contact/smiling
- Excitement/giggling/laughing
- Talking/discussing/joking/verbal encouragement
- Sitting on laps/hugs/kisses

As well as focusing on body language and positive communication, there were a number of themes that emerged from the observations recorded, along with the written feedback obtained. Listed below are the key findings.

Family Time

- The TTPS prolongs the amount of time families spend as a unit during visits
- It offers opportunities for collaborative play amongst family members, which encourages positive communication and enhanced interaction.

Tool for Talking

- The TTPS can act as an 'ice breaker' for children and imprisoned parents who find it difficult to re-connect with one another at the beginning of visiting times
- It provides a 'shared interest' and acts as a 'tool for talking' when family members struggle to communicate effectively in such a restrictive and regulated environment.

Benefits for Children

- The TTPS provides a 'distraction' for children and makes the situation 'easier to manage' for families. Providing a 'distraction' can sometimes be the main purpose of the scheme, and although the scheme intends to do more than that, the basic concept of having 'something to do' whilst adults engage in more complex conversations is an important factor in catering effectively for children visiting prison
- It allows children a sense of control in an environment where most elements of control are taken away from them. This small amount of control can empower children and help make visiting less stressful and more meaningful
- The scheme provides children with a choice of where they wish to situate themselves during their visit. Children may wish to make use of the play area to interact with other children or simply take some time away from the intense seating arrangements at the table, but there are also times when they want to interact with their imprisoned parent, and the scheme offers opportunities for this to occur in a much more child centred manner than previously offered
- Imaginative play at tables (through use of puppets, construction equipment and art and craft materials) allows children to make sense of their situation and offers a means of escapism in difficult situations.

Benefits for Imprisoned Parents

- The TTPS provides imprisoned parents with a sense of involvement and participation in children's interests. Previously all play had to take place in the play areas, away from the family unit and in isolation of the parent who is in prison. This often leaves prisoners feeling powerless and unable to engage effectively with their children. The scheme reduces these feelings and supports families in continuing relationships during general domestic visits
- The scheme allows imprisoned parents to sensitively scaffold and extend children's play by becoming involved in it. This enhances children's learning opportunities and can add great value and meaning to play experiences.

It is clear from the statements above (which all stem from actual observations and feedback) that the TTPS benefits all family members, with specific emphasis on visiting children and imprisoned parents. Whether providing children with a simple means of distraction or escapism, or enhancing bonding opportunities during general visits, the TTPS offers an enhanced visiting experience for all children and families who choose to make use of the scheme.

Appendix 6: Analysis of Understanding the Importance of Play Workshops

WHAT IS 'UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY' (UIP)?

It is clear that the general level and quality of parent-child interaction has been dramatically enhanced through the creation of PiP's specialised events, which inevitably impacts on the ability to maintain and strengthen family relationships during parental imprisonment. However, from our experience, some imprisoned parents struggle to relate to their children on visits and can find it difficult to know how to play and interact appropriately after spending such a long time apart. With this experience in mind, we developed a series of workshops, which act as a tool for preparing the prisoners involved in our child-centred events. On a wider scale, it is intended that the workshops help parents understand their children's development, learn about the importance of play and give them the opportunity to learn about how they can get involved in their children's play in order to build positive relationships with their children upon release.

The workshops have been delivered at both HMPs Channings Wood and Dartmoor. The current model runs at HMP Dartmoor only. The workshops run approximately two weeks prior to an event, with five workshops in total, however, these workshops can be tailor made to fit in with the prison regime, from one day condensed short courses to five more in-depth morning sessions. The main learning objectives focus on the importance of maintaining relationships throughout the prison sentence, reflecting on the prisoner's role as a father, understanding the role and benefits of play in children's development, involving children in the visiting process, and for the prisoners to participate in planning and setting up activities for the child-centred event. The workshops end with providing imprisoned parents the opportunity to practice parenting and play skills in a child-centred, relaxed and enjoyable environment (during the event).

WHO WAS INVOLVED

Thirty-three men have taken part in UIP workshops, all of whom have participated in the feedback process. Nineteen imprisoned dads took part in pilot workshops delivered at HMP Channings Wood and fourteen have participated at HMP Dartmoor. Two feedback surveys were developed over time. The first survey was part of the pilot programme and its primary function was to develop the workshops to fit the needs of the imprisoned fathers. The second survey was written as part of the final evaluation process, in order to measure the workshops success against meeting the project outcomes. Feedback from both surveys has been used to inform this report.

WHAT THEY TOLD US

All nineteen imprisoned dads completed the pilot feedback at HMP Channing's Wood. Amongst reporting on what areas they found most beneficial and what areas could be improved in order to develop the programme, the following findings have been combined with the second feedback survey findings.

- 97% (out of 33) reported that they found the workshops useful
- 100% of imprisoned dads (out of 33) reported that they would recommend the course to other imprisoned dads.

When considering the second feedback survey specifically, the results are an indication of the workshops success in meeting the project outcomes. The significant findings are listed below.

- Seven (out of ten) prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops will **impact on** how they **play** with their children
- Nine (out of ten) prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops will **enhance** their **relationship** with their children
- All prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops have **improved** their **understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction**
- Nine (out of ten) prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops will help making **rejoining family life** upon release a little **easier**

As well as the statistical data above, many opinions were offered within the feedback process when consulting with UIP students. Listed below are a few examples to highlight the impact the workshops have had on individual fathers and their understanding of the importance of parent-child interaction.

- "I had always considered myself a good parent until I came into prison. Doing this workshop has enabled me to reflect and consider how I can be a good parent whilst in prison"
- "It opened my eyes to the importance of playing with your child"
- "It has given me a better understanding to help and interact with my children in a positive way".
- "Helps you understand that play helps children from an early age and lasts for a long time after, play connects parent and child".
- "I was never sure of how to organise games for my child, or what sort of games at his age, and it also helped me with tips specifically for me as the father"
- "I understand that play can be more educational and education can be made fun. It has made me realise that play can help my relationship with my child."
- "I have learnt how to build a better relationship with my kids and why this is important."
- "It has made me realise that no matter how old my girl is she still needs to spend some quality time with me."
- "[The workshops] remind me my childhood was not brilliant and I would like my daughters to be different"

It appears from the results above that the UIP workshops are successful in working with imprisoned parents to improve understanding surrounding the importance of parent-child interaction (Outcome 2). As well as this, we focus a considerable amount of time in preparing for the event itself within the workshops. Inmates are encouraged to consider their children's favourite activities and collaboratively plan activities to suit interests. Prisoners are also given the opportunity to design and create invitations for their children to attend the day. These child-focussed tasks will go some way to supporting children in feeling less stressed and better able to cope with being separated from their imprisoned parent, as this process involves them within the preparation for the visit, and ensures that their interests are catered for (where possible) once they get to the prison. It could therefore be argued that the UIP workshops are meeting project Outcomes 1 and 2.

The statistical findings above indicate that not only are we improving the outlook for imprisoned parents and their children whilst they are incarcerated, we are also impacting on the prisoners confidence in their ability to resettle back in to family life upon release. Although this feedback originates from a small sample of prisoners, it could be argued that the UIP workshops may go some way in stopping imprisoned fathers re-offending once released from prison. Project outcomes and offending rates aside, the preparatory workshops which have been developed and delivered as part of the Play in Prisons project have proven to be a valuable addition to our services and have enhanced support for imprisoned fathers who want to be the best dad they can be whilst inside.