

## What we do at Time for Families?

Time for Families runs relationship courses in prisons for prisoners and their partners. These courses strengthen the relationships by improving their skills in communicating with each other, with their children, and being wise at managing their money together. *'I know now not to take the lass for granted. It makes your relationship stronger – there's something I can do every day.'* *'Inmate life is full of good and bad things but when you're with the person you love, it's the most great thing you can ever imagine.'*

### 'has bonded us together'

Our Building Stronger Families course runs over 6 days, usually one day a week for 6 weeks. Every course comprises 3 modules - 2 days each for Building Relationships together, Parenting Together and Handling Money. *'I now understand the impact my absence makes on my entire family. I've learned a lot of new techniques on how to solve conflicting issues without being biased or trying to score points. The whole exercise has bonded us together.'*

The risk of re-offending is much greater where there is a relationship breakdown. By working with prisoners and their partners to help them communicate better on every level, their relationship stands a greater chance of surviving the sentence, and the prisoner can return home to re-integrate into his family and normal life. *'I've done it! I've got the 'no shouting' rule' in our home – the house is so much calmer.'* *'For the first time I was able to unload my worries. My bloke understood exactly where I was coming from. We both broke down. But I can say, hand on heart, that I let my burdens go, forgave my husband and our marriage is spiralling upwards.'*

We ask the prison to provide lunch, and a sizeable room, which is often the chapel. *'The way the sessions are run makes it easier to open up and be honest with our views and opinions.'* *'Today has encouraged us – being together helps us be strong to resist the criticism.'*



Couples work on increasing the good things in their relationship and decreasing the bad: to show love and commitment, and to forgive each other but also to work through unresolved conflicts, feelings of anger and bad communication. *'We're working on our issues instead of blowing our lids.'*

### 'not to take the lass for granted'

The couples build up their parenting skills as a 'couple team' so that they can agree together on how to handle discipline, school issues and the family coping with the prison sentence, *'Being consistent, supporting each other's decisions, not giving in, not making Jane the nasty parent who says no.'*

Lastly, we look at how best they can handle their money together, be aware of what they spend, how to budget and plan for the future. *'My wife's better at money management – at the moment, she's the pilot and I'm the co-pilot. It sounds funny but it's true!'*

If you have any queries or would like more information about Time for Families, please feel free to contact us.

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*The couples coming on our course are in a fairly dissatisfied state (not surprisingly) but our course has a large impact*

## Kate Quigley – 30 second interview

*Kate Quigley is a Principal Officer on secondment to Time for Families*

### Did you always work for the Prison Service?

No, I came from a nursing background. I started working in Holloway in 1992 and moved onto Brixton in 1997 where I became a Senior Prison Officer. I'm still working for the Prison Service, but I'm now on the outside.

### What sort of work did you do in Brixton?

I worked on building stronger partnerships between prisoners and community groups. I believed that we, in prisons, need community involvement if we are going to get the men to really address their offending behaviour.

### How many projects did you run?

At one point I had 27 projects on the go at once! I did sometimes feel like a headless chicken, although it gave the prison a real buzz.

### At the risk of embarrassing you, have you won any awards?

Yes, the Butler Trust gave me an award for excellence in 2005/6. The prize was great, but the best part has been that I was given a three year secondment to work with some charities.



### So how have you spent your time?

It's been great. I'm on the Corston Review Committee and I've helped get The Clink, which is the first ever prison restaurant, off the ground in High Down. One of my favourite projects is Time for Families.

### Why did you want to work for Time for Families?

Well, I worked for them on the inside as a Prison Officer when the Governor introduced this charity to Brixton. One of the prisoners I worked with, Mick, gave me one of the best compliments ever: 'Miss Quigley has given my son back a better father since I attended a Time for Families course.'

### What do you do with Time for Families now you're on the outside?

I've introduced many prison governors and officers to their Building Stronger Families course. It's very good to have a foot in both camps! I can understand the prisons' worries about security but I also know that we need to manage risk, rather than letting the risk manage us.

### Why Time for Families?

What I love to see is the couples sitting eating lunch together and talking intensely. Often it's about things they both admit later they have rarely, if ever, touched on. Also, I was really touched personally by the course – it made me decide to get married (and luckily Lloyd agreed).

If you would like to contact Kate about running a course in your prison, please email her on: [kate.quigley@timeforfamilies.org.uk](mailto:kate.quigley@timeforfamilies.org.uk)

## Can you measure relationships?

*Simon Pellew, our CEO, looks at how we measure TFF's impact*

Can you measure relationships? After all, they are totally personal and subjective. There are, however, clear ways of measuring whether a relationship is stronger or weaker after an intervention.

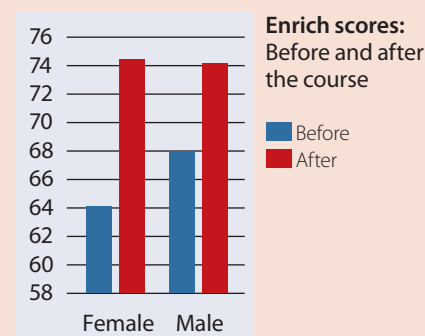
We use a questionnaire called 'Enrich' to measure the satisfaction each course participant feels about their relationship. This correlates quite well with the stability of the relationship, although, surprisingly it is possible to have an unhappy, stable relationship or a happy, but unstable, one. Enrich wasn't designed for prison work, and so we have had to adjust it a bit (eg toning down the question on sex).

When we first started using Enrich, we were worried that the results might go down. We wondered whether everyone would be incredibly optimistic (along the lines of 'there's nothing wrong with my relationship') and that after the course, with its healthy dose of realism, the men, in particular, would feel a lot less confident.

### 'has a large impact'

But our fears were not realised. The results are extremely good. Both men and women start low (by comparison with a national average), although women start lower. Both pick up strongly, but the women increase more. In other words, the couples coming on our course are in a fairly dissatisfied state (not surprisingly) but our course has a large impact.

Like all research, there are plenty of unanswered questions. We do know the course has an impact for at least 3 months (because we have done a phone survey – see below), but not if we permanently change the way couples relate to each other. And, of course, we would love to be able to prove that our course reduces re-offending. Sadly, we can't do that yet because we need a much larger sample, but the recent NOMS research on the importance of relationships makes us hopeful that we will be able to prove it one day.





## Till death us do part

**Couples get on much better while the Building Stronger Families course is running. But does it continue to help their relationship? And what do they remember a few months after it's finished?**

To find out, we rang the partners two months after our course at HMP Featherstone had finished. In one case, both the (now) ex-prisoner and his partner were at home. In the seven others, the men were still in prison.

### 'spend more wisely'

The ex-prisoner was upbeat. *'Yes, I remember a lot – especially about communicating with each other, to use better listening techniques. Also we found the budgeting and money very good.'* His partner confirmed *'we learned to spend more wisely and plan more what we spend on.'*

Another partner said she remembered *'lots: the communication, speaking and listening, the Love Languages, all the STOP signs and, yes, I notice when they are happening with us and know to ease off.'* In fact, nearly every partner remembered the STOP signs.

The partners expressed a real enthusiasm to see their relationship in a positive light, and

hope that things were improving: *'Things have been a lot better since doing it – we really loved it.'* *'I found the money part really useful. I copied the spending record and use it all the time.'*

### 'more loving with our son'

We asked whether the couples had children. (Only five out of the eight couples did, and theirs were very young.) One partner said *'Yes, a son who's now 18 months old. He is much better, more loving with our son during visits.'* From another: *'One little girl of 2 years. We have talked about the changes when he comes out. We realise we will have to think of one another and work around her needs.'* There was a slight ambivalence: the women were hopeful their men would give time and attention to their children in the future, but recognised there would need to be more changes.

We want the course to be as helpful as possible, so we asked if there was anything we could do to make it more so. *'The only thing*

*is to have more time, especially to practice what we learned. All the content was needed, there's nothing that should be taken out.'* *'I learned more through the doing rather than the talking. I would like there to be a few more activities.'*

We also asked the participants if they had suggestions to improve the course: *'No, I don't think so. Everybody was really helpful. I still have the workbook and look at it sometimes.'* *'Not really. It was very good to be on the course.'*

*Just keep it up. You are really lovely people. It will help a lot of people'* **Could it run in your prison?**

***STOP Signs: negative modes of communication that need to be avoided: Scoring points, Thinking the worst, Opting out and Putting down.***



*'My son is totally different since the start of this course, it's amazing'*



## Sons and Mothers

### **'Building Bridges' course for young people and their mothers**

*'Have you ever tried to have a long conversation with a 16 year old? On a normal visit, after half an hour or so, we'd run out of things to say. I'd find myself looking round the room and twiddling my thumbs. Your course has made things so much easier for us to talk.'*

This came from one mother after our first course in HMYOI Wetherby.

Our adult course makes such a positive impact and so we wanted to see whether it would be as good with Young People and their mothers. We wondered whether it would be hard to get the boys' interest, but it was clear from the start they were serious about improving their relationships with their parents.

We have run two courses at Wetherby, and one at Cookham Wood. Getting the course to work smoothly was not always easy. Several mums

had to travel long distances, with one having to travel over 100 miles, so some prison staff drove several mothers from Leeds to Wetherby.

Quizzes and exercises on Communication and Listening worked particularly well; each parent and son were a team together, and they actually got on well with some surprising results. One boy, Pete, identified physical affection as one of his 'love languages'. His dad said **'I realise my son needs some undivided attention from me. Not easy, but I'm going to do it.'**

The course gave another boy, John, and his mum the time to find a solid basis to work from - **'I feel we have connected properly for the first time for ages.'** John was released 9 months ago, now lives back with his mum and has stayed out of trouble – a complete turnaround from his past history.

We found using video clips to illustrate tough subjects helped our group discussions. Both sons and mothers could see immediately how they could apply these to their lives. **'I've got a much better relationship now'** said one young man. **'I've got a better understanding'** said another. **'My son is totally different since the start of this course, it's amazing'** came from a delighted mum.

A Probation Officer wrote to us: **'I don't think you can overestimate the importance of a healthy parent-child relationship and the difference that having positive support and encouragement can have, especially in regards to not re-offending.'**

If you would like to know more, please email Rob Askew: [rob.askew@timeforfamilies.org.uk](mailto:rob.askew@timeforfamilies.org.uk)

## Tying the knot

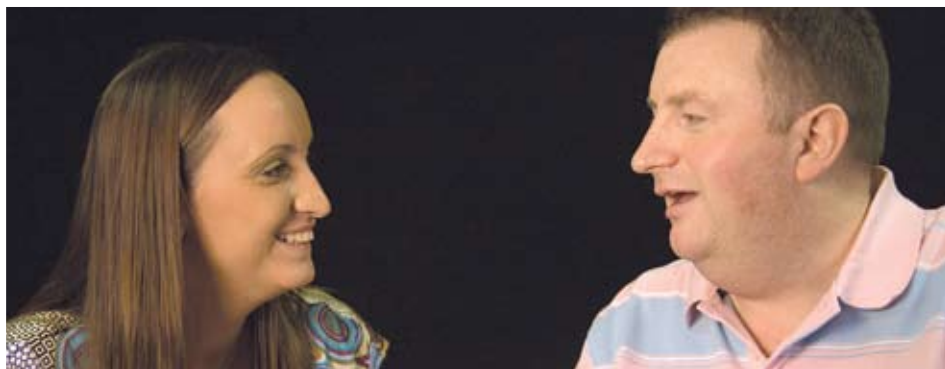
### **Making the partnership with the prison work**

Jane Corrin is the Pathways and Interventions Manager for HMP High Down, a large local just to the south of London. She is our liaison with the prison. She has worked with offenders for nearly 20 years, but in probation not prisons. In 2007 Jane came to High Down on secondment to manage the probation team and last year she switched over.

*'I went to a presentation about Time for Families in May 07, and by August the first course was running. Never before had I been involved in setting up a course from its inception - it was very exciting!' Jane says. 'When I saw the first course in action, I was totally impressed by the simplicity and relevance of its material, relevant not just for prisoners but for all of us.'*

### **'totally impressed'**

*'Your Team Leaders run the course with great humanity for the couples; they also show complete respect for the prison regime. The whole course is very tightly managed, with lots of checks of prisoners to ensure you've got the right men. It has to be meticulous'* Jane emphasises, *'because we want nothing to jeopardise it.'* She works closely with Security to ensure robust systems are in place.



Jane's team delivers course leaflets to men round the prison; High Down has a high turnover and so it is important to make sure as many prisoners as possible hear about the course. *'Prisoners often ask me when the next course starts. Word-of-mouth is the best recommendation.'* For the one day a week for 6 weeks that the course is running, Jane is also in charge of meeting the ladies in the Visitor Centre and bringing them into the prison.

### **'great humanity'**

Jane notices the men are different by the end of the course. *'They may have started the course thinking it was a good way of getting to spend more time with their partners; by the end, though, they all have something positive to say about what they have learned, and you can see how much*

*better they are at communicating.'* For Jane, one of the highlights was hearing a couple say *'We never knew exactly what our problem was ....we've now been able to work towards putting it right.'* Occasionally though, the course highlights that couples have irreconcilable differences, and they end up separating.

Time for Families has been running courses in High Down for nearly two years. Jane admits there have been hiccups along the way but *'overall we've worked very well as a team. I've complete trust and faith in the Team Leaders. The joint approach, the good collaboration – they help make your course so successful. Keeping the men's relationships going in prison has got to be a help not a hindrance, and, we all hope, an encouragement not to re-offend.'*