

NORTHERN COMMUNITY JUSTICE AUTHORITY – HMP & YOI GRAMPIAN FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE PROPOSAL

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council Leaders and Chief Executives from the Northern CJA area of the ongoing development of HMP & YOI Grampian and a proposal for a Family Support Centre at the new prison.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2008 the Scottish Government announced its intention to replace HMP Aberdeen and HMP Peterhead with the UK's first fully community facing prison, HMP & YOI Grampian, which would be built next to the existing HMP Peterhead. The prison would hold around 500 - 550 inmates and cater for all regimes i.e. adult men and women and young men and women.
- 2.2 In October 2011 Skanska was awarded the contract to construct the new prison and work commenced in January 2012. The new prison is due to open during the winter of 2013/14.
- 2.3 HMP & YOI Grampian will be a first in Scotland (and the UK) as it will house all regimes as mentioned above. This will see many prisoners currently housed in national prisons, and other establishments, outwith the Northern CJA area returning to their local area.
- 2.4 The current Scottish Prison Service (SPS) proposal is that the adult male population will be from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray (part) and the Shetland Islands. All women offenders from the Northern CJA area will be housed in HMP & YOI Grampian as will all young offenders.

3. Family Support Centres

- 3.1 A prison Family Support Centre is a facility in which visitors can wait for their visit prior to entering the main prison. These are normally situated outside the main prison and range from unstaffed rooms with a vending machine to fully staffed purpose-built resource centres serving hot and cold food and linking Supports to support and information on site as well as within the prison and wider community. Some carry out essential functions for the prison such as booking in visitors and providing lockers, while others have no operational role.
- 3.2 Essentially they (Centres) exist to meet the needs of all visiting relatives or friends by providing a pleasant, safe welcoming environment, dignity, respect and the opportunity to discuss difficulties and worries, and to provide clear, full, and relevant information.

- 3.3 Maintenance of family ties during custody reduces a prisoners' reoffending by up to six times. However, prison visits can place tremendous stress on families. The cost and logistics of travel, prison rules and regimes, institutional visiting environments and fear of other prisoners all deter families from visiting someone in prison. Nearly half of prisoners lose contact with their families as a result of their imprisonment.
- 3.4 Research suggests that a Family Support Centre would provide good value for money as they: 1) reduces the tension of visiting; 2) prevents problems escalating; 3) provides a positive impression of the prison; and 4) help prisoners maintain family ties.
- 3.5 The Scottish Prison Service has decided that there will be a Family Support Centre at HMP & YOI Grampian. The Centre will be purpose built and be 'outwith the 'walls' of the prison itself. The SPS will provide the building, maintain the building and provide the necessary utilities. They (SPS) will also provide a member of staff to act as coordinator between the Centre and the Prison. Any other required services within the Centre e.g. staffing, services, resources etc. will be for community provision.

4. HMP & YOI Grampian Proposal

- 4.1 The Northern CJA welcomes the commitment by SPS to provide a Family Support Centre for HMP & YOI Grampian.
- 4.2 Discussions/meetings have been held with SPS staff and the Northern CJA Convener, Chief Officer and Officers from Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council. There is support and commitment for:
- The formation of a Family Support Centre Management Group from within the Community Justice Authority area.
 - The provision of a Centre Manager and administrative support or other staff as deemed appropriate.
 - When the Centre opens the initial service provision will be
 - a welcoming, comfortable and safe environment for visitors
 - refreshments will be available
 - a child and young person friendly environment with a play area
 - female and male toilets with baby changing facilities
 - the availability of advice from Centre staff and the SPS coordinator
 - an SPS staff member acting as coordinator between the prison and Centre
 - the provision of induction and guidance for first time Supports
 - signposting to other services e.g. local authority social work, housing, health services etc.
- 4.3 In time there will be opportunities to enhance the service provision with opportunities for other organisations/agencies to provide services on a regular basis e.g. health promotion, counselling or other 3rd sector support. Family Support Centres are a valuable means of supporting isolated and vulnerable families. Centres therefore have the potential to provide a crucial link for families to community-based supports, to the prison, and ultimately to their family members in custody.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The above proposals will have a financial implication in respect of the community based elements. Primarily this would be for the provision of a Centre Manager and associated support staff. The Northern CJA views this as a unique opportunity to have a public sector led Family Support Centre funded proportionately by the seven Community Planning Partnerships within the CJA area.
- 5.2 The Northern CJA is seeking agreement in principle for the formation of a Public Sector Partnership with a commitment to the sustainability of funding in respect of the community input to the HMP & YOI Grampian Family Support Centre.
- 5.3 The Family Support Centre Manager/Development Coordinator would be responsible for developing links between the new prison and the communities of the Northern CJA and the development of volunteering opportunities within the Centre.
- 5.4 It is recognised that a Family Support Centre will offer opportunities for 3rd Sector organisations to provide services. There will also be opportunities for the use of volunteers in respect of service provision. However, it is felt that the centre should be managed and staffed by paid qualified personnel working to the proposed Management Group with appropriate monitoring and governance arrangements in place. Overall scrutiny would sit with the CJA.
- 5.5 It is estimated that the funding requirement for the Centre as described above and including operating/administrative costs will be circa £100,000 per annum.

6. Recommendation

That the new HMP & YOI Grampian Family Support Centre management, staffing and operating budget be provided proportionately by the Community Planning Partnerships within the area of the Northern Community Justice authority.

**Peter Willox
Chief Officer
Northern CJA**

Report prepared by:
Peter Willox
Chief Officer, Northern CJA
November 2012