



ROWA! goes to prison - HMP Foston Hall

*Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for
Offenders:
A Regional Pilot Project
Managed by Read On Write Away!*

Evaluation Report

**The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
September 2006**



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Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude to:

- All the individuals who kindly gave their time to be interviewed;
- The offenders and their families for their participation;
- ROWA! for supplying the documentation which contributed to this evaluation.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the *Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders: A Regional Pilot Project Managed by Read On Write Away!* (ROWA!). It provides an overview of some of the challenges that FLLN providers and practitioners encountered during the development and delivery of the pilot programme and moves on to make recommendations to improve the quality of future FLLN activity.

Findings are based on information gathered through consultation with partners and providers, and with feedback from families involved in the pilot. These included a project review, telephone interviews, feedback and evaluation forms and documentation provided by the pilot project managers. The evaluation process commenced in March 2006 and was completed by September 2006.

The aims of the project included a reduction in re-offending; breaking intergenerational cycles of underachievement; and improving the physical and mental health of offenders and their families – all through Family Learning. The evaluation findings suggest that these aims are achievable but require evidence drawn from longitudinal tracking of offenders and their families.

The project objectives have in most cases been met. The evaluation findings have revealed quite clearly that the overwhelming effect of the FLLN sessions and tasters was a strengthening of family relationships. The pilot project provided offenders with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds and parents were encouraged to support their children's learning development.

The pilot project successfully engaged a large number of offenders in Family Learning but was less successful in terms of the number of families involved. ROWA! assembled a very large number of partners for involvement in the project and in the majority of cases, these partnerships worked well together. The data suggested that the partnerships with the Probation Service were the weakest and this appeared to negatively impact on the community aspects of the pilot project.

Recommendations include suggestions for improved programme planning, promotion and recruitment and further research including:

- More time needs to be built into programme planning and funding to reflect the challenges involved in setting up a new programme;
- The benefits of 'word of mouth' recruitment need to be explored further;
- More research is required to ascertain what works with different types of offenders in terms of recruitment;
- A research study tracking the improvements in literacy, language and numeracy and health improvements for offenders and their families prior to and post Family Learning involvement would lend the research evidence in this field greater weight.

Introduction

The Green Paper, *Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment*, sets out the government's aim to improve skills to move offenders into employment, and break the cycle of re-offending, through a 'new emphasis' on skills and jobs for offenders across prisons and probation, and a focus on motivating and engaging offenders. The paper notes the importance of family contact time in breaking the 'Cycle of Crime':

"For many offenders, maintaining strong links with their families and communities is a key factor in enabling rehabilitation. Conversely, the breakdown of these links, and the ensuing isolation, can increase the risk of re-offending" (DfES 2005, p.11).

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the evaluation of the *Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders: A Regional Pilot Project Managed by Read On Write Away! (ROWA!)*. It provides an overview of some of the challenges that FLLN providers and practitioners encountered during the development and delivery of the pilot programme and moves on to make recommendations to improve the quality of future FLLN activity.

The information used in this report was gathered through consultation with partners and providers, and with feedback from families involved in the pilot. The evaluation process commenced in March 2006 and was completed by September 2006.

Family Learning engages adults and children in learning together and involves explicit learning outcomes for both. It helps parents to help their children achieve, gives parents the confidence to go on learning for themselves and encourages progression to further learning (NIACE 2006). The term 'families' is used to indicate intergenerational relationships in which people care for each other, similarly, the term 'parents' includes those with the main responsibility of caring for a child and is not restricted to biological parents and may include mothers, fathers, grandparents, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child, including looked after children.

Evaluation Objectives

The outcome of the evaluation of the ROWA! pilot project was seen as a way to position the partners to replicate the model in the future.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Review and record the rationale, aims and methods of the pilot project;
- Identify the outcomes of the provision on two key groups; offenders and their families and staff and institutions;
- Identify areas for further research;
- Produce a report and make recommendations for the planning and delivery of future FLLN programmes that will improve practice.

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation used research methods such as focus groups and interviews, which would generate qualitative data and provide a realistic overview of the experiences of learning and skills providers and practitioners, prison and probation service staff and learners. These methods were considered appropriate because of the small numbers of individuals involved in the pilot project.

Findings were drawn from telephone interviews, completed questionnaires and discussions with:

- Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) providers;
- Local authorities;
- ROWA!;
- Sure Start;
- Prison and Probation Service Staff.

The interview questions explored the background to the pilot project and the interviewee's involvement in it; the Family Learning already provided by their organisation and rolling out Family Learning to offenders; the impact of the pilot and recommendations for the future success of any similar projects (see Appendix 1).

Learners' views were gathered via feedback reports from partners some of which included direct feedback from offenders and their families (a detailed list of documentation analysed is presented in Appendix 2). These were supplemented with literature from ROWA! including timetables, action plans, course materials and reports from project staff.

The qualitative data generated by the interviews was analysed manually alongside other evaluation data from partners and the documents supplied by ROWA! The data was sorted to identify key themes and patterns.

Context

The Benefits of Family Learning

Family Learning engages adults and children in learning together and involves explicit learning outcomes for both. It helps parents to help their children achieve, gives parents the confidence to go on learning for themselves and encourages progression to further learning. The term 'families' is used to indicate intergenerational relationships in which people care for each other, similarly, the term 'parents' includes those with the main responsibility of caring for a child and is not restricted to biological parents and may include mothers, fathers, grandparents, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child, including looked after children.

There is strong and ample research evidence to suggest that Family Learning impacts positively on parents and children alike, encouraging a love of learning together and strengthening the links between home, school and the community. The research evidence makes a strong case for the role Family Learning can play in supporting a range of outcomes for children, adults, families and communities in

relation to development, behaviour, achievement, learning and skills, returning to employment, social inclusion and participation in cultural activities.

Family Learning can benefit offenders; their literacy and numeracy skills may improve, they may develop a greater understanding of how their children learn and gain parenting knowledge and their family relationships may be strengthened. These findings emerged from a 2004 study carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which also suggested that “*Family Learning programmes offered considerably more benefits to participants than the family contact experienced during normal visits*” (Halsey et al 2004, p.1). Family Learning provides an opportunity not only for family interaction but quality time and quality interaction for those involved.

Family Learning and National Policy

Family Learning draws on a number of traditions, including adult literacy, lifelong learning, early learning, school improvement, parenting and supporting children’s learning. Since 2000, national policy initiatives such as Sure Start Local Programmes, Extended Schools, the national primary strategy and the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme have all stimulated the development of Family Learning. More recently, the government’s strategies for parenting and parent support acknowledge the role of learning in families.

Family Learning Funding

In England, provision for families is part of the Personal and Community Development Learning offer of Local Authorities funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In 2004-05, for example, £23 million was available for Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) programmes and £12 million for Wider Family Learning (WFL) programmes. The *Skills for Life*¹ policy has driven the development of FLLN. FLLN programmes enable parents to improve skills in essential areas and to support their children’s literacy, language and numeracy development. Many parents move on from FLLN to other types of learning, volunteering and employment. WFL programmes are seen by family learning practitioners as a useful way to engage parents/carers in first step learning; to introduce parents and children together to new experiences in learning and encourage parents to progress to further learning, training or employment. Whereas FLLN programmes are taken from a menu that has been developed and piloted nationally, many WFL programmes are developed locally and accredited through local Open College Networks. Funding from the LSC constitutes the major source of funding for Family Learning. In addition, there are as many as 30 different funding streams both governmental and non-governmental that may be used to fund Family Learning (NIACE 2005).

Family Learning Provision for Offenders

There is a variety of well-established Family Learning initiatives currently running across the custodial estate and community. These initiatives have a range of explicit focuses, from parenting skills to reading, but in practice often address similar areas.

¹ http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/ABS_Strategy_Doc_Final.pdf

Storybook Dads/Storybook Mums

The *Storybook Dad* project, which started at HMP Dartmoor in Devon and has now spread to over 40 prisons, supports prisoners in recording themselves telling a story to their children. The stories are edited on computer, and sound effects and music are added. Finally, the story is put on CD and sent to their children. Some prisoners write their own story and make a book using computer graphics, offering a chance to develop further ICT skills. *Storybook Mums* works with female prisoners, and the project is open to prisoners of all ages. The project offers prisoners the chance to build their confidence and self-esteem, a sense of themselves as valued learners, together with greater literacy and ICT skills. Similarly, the children benefit from reduced separation anxiety, more settled behaviour, better speech and literacy skills. The *Storybook Dad* project was this year awarded an 'Opening Doors to Adult Learners Award' from NIACE.

HMP Gartree and HMP Nottingham also run family reading projects, setting up reading activities through the visitors' centres. KIDS VIP, funded by the National Year of Reading, ran storytelling workshops for visiting children, with a storyteller working with the families.

Fathers Inside and Family Man

There is also a range of courses and programmes supporting offenders in exploring and developing parenting skills. Courses such as drama-based charity Safe Ground's *Fathers Inside* and *Family Man*, focus on parenting and family relationships. Both were developed with significant input from prisoners, and involve a strong team-based approach using drama, supported by building a written portfolio. Following involvement in the courses, prisoners felt they had a better understanding of family relationships and parenting, and acquired new parenting skills and knowledge. Participants also reported improvements in communicating with confidence and in their reading (Halsey et al 2002, pp.6 -7).

"Prisoners who maintain strong family ties whilst they are in prison are up to six times less likely to re-offend" (Campaign for Learning 2005, p.4).

Particularly in relation to female offenders, there is specific concern expressed that family responsibilities and learning activity are not mutually exclusive.

The ROWA! Pilot Project

FLLN for offenders is a regional pilot project based in the East Midlands managed by ROWA! (Read On Write Away!). ROWA! are an independent partnership organisation that aims to improve and celebrate literacy and basic skills development.

The timescale

The pilot commenced in December 2005 and activities were completed by the end of July 2006.

Aims and objectives

The aims of the project were to:

- Reduce re-offending;
- Break the intergenerational cycle of underachievement through Family Learning;
- Improve the physical and mental health of offenders and their families.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Provide prisoners with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds;
- Encourage parents to support their children's learning development;
- Develop good parenting skills;
- Develop a broader knowledge of activities that meets the needs of males and females;
- Further develop literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents in the two contexts (prison and community).

Project partners

This project has used a multi-agency approach working with prison and community settings to roll out FLLN learning, reflecting the common policy and practice aims in Family Learning for offenders. Partners have included Heads of Learning and Skills (HOLS) at prisons, personnel in Probation Services, local colleges, local authority Family Learning co-ordinators, ROWA! staff, prison staff and other organisations which included Sure Start and Primary Care Trust personnel. In addition, the LSC and the Campaign for Learning have been partners. In July 2006 contacts for this project totalled 24 individuals.

Similarly, at national level, the DfES, the LSC and the National Probation Service (NPS) work to a joint policy framework. The NPS identifies learning needs, delivers literacy, language and numeracy screening, and refers offenders to appropriate provision; the LSC plans and funds learning programmes for offenders; and the Social Inclusion and Offenders Unit in the DfES leads in bringing partners together to decide policy and monitor progress. Under the new Offender Learning And Skills Service, the LSC assumes responsibility for planning and funding learning and skills for all offenders.

Project sites

The prisons involved were HMP Nottingham, HMP Leicester, HMP Foston Hall, HMP Gartree and HMP Lincoln. In addition, the ROWA! Learning Bus visited the prisons and the Aspley community in Nottingham:

- HMP Nottingham is a closed category B local prison that serves the courts of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Category B prisoners are "*prisoners who don't require maximum security, but for whom escape needs to be made very difficult*"². All category A, B and C prisons are closed, with only

² <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/prison/>

category D prisoners, who are not considered to pose a risk to the public, kept in open prisons;

- HMP Lincoln is a category B closed local prison;
- HMP Leicester is a category B local prison for adult males;
- HMP Gartree is a male lifer closed category B prison in Market Harborough, Leicestershire;
- HMP Foston Hall differs to the rest, as it is a closed female prison in Derbyshire.

Probation services in Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire were also involved in the pilot project. Offenders are supervised in the community by Probation Service staff, often after release from a custodial environment. The ROWA! Learning Bus, for example, was taken out to a Nottinghamshire Probation Service reporting session in Aspley, Nottingham.

ROWA! pilot programmes – participants

The outcomes and outputs planned for the pilot project include:

- 30 offenders in custody take part in Family Learning programmes;
- 30 offenders and their families take part in Family Learning programmes.

The pilot project exceeded the numbers of prisoners taking part in Family Learning sessions with a total of 76 offenders in custody taking part. A large proportion of participants attended the events at HMP Leicester as part of the Reading Dads week of activity; 24 men attended the cartooning workshop, 22 attended a creative writing workshop and 12 attended the K'NEX Challenge and healthy lifestyles taster session.

Unfortunately, the target of 30 offenders and their families participating in the sessions was not achieved - 11 offenders and their families took part in the Family Learning pilot sessions. The difficulties encountered in engaging families in the community are explored in the Evaluation Findings section of this report.

Attendance at the sessions in July 2006 was as follows:

- HMP Nottingham - 11 offenders attended *Working with my Family* and 1 family had lunch together;
- HMP Leicester - 58 offenders attended sessions;
- HMP Foston Hall - 5 mums and 9 children visited the Learning Bus;
- HMP Gartree - 6 offenders and their families attended sessions;
- HMP Lincoln - 7 offenders attended a *Working with my Family* module.

Participants in the sessions delivered as part of the pilot project included offenders, their partners, their children ranging from babies to teenagers and other family members such as nephews.

ROWA! pilot programmes – content and delivery methods

ROWA! developed a number of activities as part of the FLLN pilot project:

Health sacks

Health sacks is a twelve-hour course delivered in six two-hour sessions with an explicit health focus with some elements of literacy and numeracy. It was intended to provide support for the partners of offenders located at HMP Nottingham. Health sacks addressed social, health, emotional and family issues, for example, 'Taking Care of Yourself' considered issues such as stress, sexual health, relaxation, healthy eating and substance misuse; 'Taking Care of the Family' encouraged healthy eating with involvement from local Primary Care Trust partners; 'Making the Most of My Family' focussed on speaking and listening, for example, supporting children at school, parents as role models and communication whilst 'Staying Healthy' revisited the topics covered in the other modules, signposted to other organisations and celebrated completion of the course.

Working with my Family

The *Working with my Family* course was specifically developed for use in a prison setting and consists of five, two-hour sessions. Modules have an explicit literacy and numeracy focus with topics including speaking and listening, reading and writing, numeracy, supporting my family, and staying positive upon release. The last sessions considers the support available to offenders following release from prison such as progression onto further learning opportunities, developing positive relationships with schools and at home, self-help and a celebration of the completion of the course.

K'NEX Challenge

In addition, ROWA! developed K'NEX Challenge, a two-hour session for parents using K'NEX kits to support their children's numeracy learning. ROWA! also have a ten-week K'NEX Family Numeracy course.

ICT taster sessions

ICT taster sessions were also designed for use on the ROWA! Learning Bus. Software such as Storybook Weaver was used to engage families in learning activities. Storybook Weaver aims to stimulate creativity with suggestions for stories. It also includes sound effects and music which can be added to the stories.

A mixture of taster sessions and course modules were delivered with the tasters acting as a means to facilitate recruitment. As the Campaign for Learning suggests in its guide to working with offenders in Family Learning:

"Family days and events are an excellent way of offering some intergenerational activities to stimulate learning within families. Short events can be used as an exciting recruitment tool to springboard learners on to new provision. They also offer providers an opportunity to develop and trial new activities" (2005, p.6).

Sessions and tasters delivered at the prisons and in the community included use of the materials created by ROWA! supplemented by activities such as cartooning, creative writing, drumming, quizzes and football.

Evaluation Findings

This section presents the findings of the evaluation in relation to:

- Programme planning, promotion and recruitment;
- The relationship between the pilot programme and existing FLLN programmes;
- Pilot programme content and delivery models;
- The impact of pilot programmes.

Programme Planning, Promotion and Recruitment

A number of issues emerged from the data in relation to programme planning, promotion and recruitment, which are presented in this section. A number of strengths also emerged and these are included in the following sub-sections. They include:

- Partnerships and relationships;
- Security;
- Rapid movement of prisoners;
- Time involved in the delivery of the pilot project;
- Diversity of learners.

Partnerships and relationships

In terms of the pilot project, ROWA!'s role was to facilitate FLLN activity with other organisations delivering the programmes. Sarah Benson, ROWA! Project Development Worker for the pilot, contacted the various personnel involved for initial discussions to see how the project could be taken forward:

"I was invited to the initial start of project meeting. This involved many other organisations including Sure Start, Probation, Family Learning Network etc." (Family Learning Co-ordinator, City Council).

ROWA!'s role was to plan the project, make contact with and engage suitable partners and deliverers and then monitor its progress. Sarah considered the various agendas impacting upon a range of partners from the prisons, local authorities, Probation Service, voluntary and community sectors to determine the contributions that each could make to the pilot project and the issues which may impact upon delivery. Those delivering the programmes undertook some training with ROWA! ROWA! aimed to train 30 staff in Family Learning awareness training, in fact, 23 staff were trained. One interviewee noted *"it was quite a good introduction; we weren't short of any information at any point"* (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

Overall, the experiences of those involved in the setting up of the programme were positive. There were some reservations, however, as to whether the project would add anything to what was already taking place; in relation to the difficulties encountered by prison staff in setting up programmes; and in the numbers of prisoners and families recruited:

"It was very positive and was building on partnership working that we're very keen on here" (Dad's Reading Prison Project Worker).

"I think it is fraught with difficulties but this has passed quite smoothly" (Family Learning Co-ordinator, County Council).

"The experience was positive. It was the amount of people that was disappointing" (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

"OK... most difficulties occurred due to the nature of us being a local prison" (Prison Resettlement Worker).

"The visit of the mobile project to Foston Hall prison was a great success and there was a lot of interest in the mobile project" (Learning Bus Driver).

"There was great willingness to work together. However, sometimes other priorities were barriers to that" (Development Manager).

Partnership working proved to be a positive aspect of setting up the pilot project. One partner noted that whilst ROWA! did not have the local knowledge in one particular area this was countered by drawing on the expertise of those who did:

"Whilst ROWA! didn't have a local knowledge they managed to get most of the key partners around the table at the initial meeting" (Family Learning Co-ordinator, City Council).

Similarly, the project built upon existing partnerships such as that between one prison and the local library service:

"I'm actually employed by the local library service, so the prison is already in a partnership with the library service, which is a very good partnership, working well" (Dad's Reading Prison Project Worker).

However, the partnerships with the Probation Services were fairly tenuous:

"Disappointing results in the sense of the work on the ICT bus. That was the link with the Probation Service... We could have had stronger links with the Probation Service... I think Probation could have pushed more people or advised people to come our way" (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

"The partnership with the Probation Service was difficult as their staff did not seem to have been advised by their management of what we were doing on their site" (ROWA! project worker).

"We had less success working with the Probation Service. Not because they weren't willing but because of where the Probation Service are at. They seem to be a little less organised and had less of an on the ground structure that we could tap into" (Development Manager).

The pilot hoped to facilitate Family Learning with offenders and their families in both prison and community settings. However, the community delivery was not as successful as that in the prisons. For example, those working at HMP Nottingham

had intended to target prisoners from a particular area of Nottingham. This was revised because of the unsuitability of the men involved. It was hoped that the Probation Service would promote the Family Learning sessions and a course for partners would be provided in the community. Ultimately, due to time pressures, plans at HMP Nottingham were revised to provide a taster day.

Similarly, New College Nottingham was engaged to deliver ICT on the ROWA! Learning Bus, deliver Story sacks with the Health sacks team and Family Learning in the prisons. However, attendance on the ROWA! Learning Bus was very low. This was judged from the point of view of the college to be because of the weak existing links with the Probation Service and because the college did not draw on the people it knew in these areas, as it was employed purely as a deliverer:

“In hindsight we could have worked more closely together but that wasn’t the brief at that point. We were purely deliverers... we were already in Aspley and could probably have drawn a few more people in” (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

“The main challenges seem to have been recruitment within the community for Health sacks” (ROWA! project worker).

However, an alternate view suggested that the ICT delivered on the ROWA! Learning Bus was a success and well received by offenders and their families.

The Health sacks course planned for Aspley was unfortunately cancelled as some of the prisoners involved were moved from Nottingham to other locations in the country. This was in spite of a first taster session with crèche facilities and lunch for those involved.

The challenges inherent in partnership working, particularly with such a large number of organisations, were noted by the Development Manager of the pilot project:

“Every single one of those areas whether it be local authorities or prison or probation will have their own ways of doing things, their own processes by which they do it, they all speak their own language and they all have their own priorities” (Development Manager).

The programmes offered to offenders and their families were promoted primarily by word of mouth whilst posters, leaflets, letters and the involvement of personnel such as prison education officers and those in education departments, health visitors and Probation Services also played their part. It emerged from the interviews that the Probation Services had not been as successful in engaging families as anticipated and that voluntary and community sector organisations had greater success. Taster sessions were also used as a way to promote Family Learning activities:

“The programme was promoted by a taster session and a poster campaign also by the Probation reporting centre” (Learning Bus Driver).

For those working in HMP Nottingham and HMP Lincoln, existing Family Learning provision meant that staff could speak to those already involved in learning:

"I went round to men who I knew had already been involved in Storybook Dads or Reading Together and spoke to them about the project and invited them to come... The other way was to go into the Education Department and go into every class and tell them that this was happening and invite them to sign up. I put posters up on the wings saying that it was happening and telling them how to apply" (Dad's Reading Prison Project Worker).

"In the end we had to do it through the prisoners and then make sure that we could speak to the wives and partners to make sure that it was okay" (Prison Librarian).

The Campaign for Learning's guide to *Working with Offenders in Family Learning* confirms that word of mouth and personal invitations are often the most effective method of recruiting to Family Learning events (2005).

Security

One of the main challenges experienced by those involved in the pilot project that emerged from the interviews with partners, was the prison system itself. There was some suggestion that a lack of understanding of this on the part of some partners meant that there were high expectations made of the pilot which were possibly over ambitious. Those working in prisons were able to cast some light on the processes involved in setting up, promoting, recruiting and delivering Family Learning in such settings:

"Because the taster day involved families coming in with their partners in the jail, it was always going to be difficult for our security department to pass people who wanted to take part because they scrutinise people... There were lots of public protection issues, like the prisoners might want their wives in but they might not be getting on with their wives... You don't think about it, they might have thought it was a good opportunity for a get together, a nice meal together but their wives might not have wanted any contact" (Prison Librarian).

This meant that it was actually easier to recruit participants from among those men who had already taken part in some kind of Family Learning or family reading activity in the prison previously:

"The men on my Big Book Share programme have been passed by the security department. So we knew that they would be allowed to do it" (Prison Librarian).

The evaluation of the Safe Ground family relationships and parenting programme also noted the tensions inherent in trying to deliver programmes in prison settings:

"Interviewees... stressed that parties must appreciate the different priorities at play and work within the boundaries of the regime. For such initiatives to succeed it was considered important to have the full backing of the prison and to promote initiatives to all staff involved" (Halsey et al 2002, p.5).

Rapid movement of prisoners

The difficulties involved in trying to deliver Family Learning in prisons, particularly, as in the example of Category B prisons such as HMP Lincoln, impacted upon recruitment to sessions. The rapid turnover of prisoners in certain types of setting

made it very difficult to engage and retain prisoners on programmes and was acknowledged by those working in prisons:

“Recruiting men because they weren’t there, they moved on quickly, the turnover” (Prison Librarian).

“What happens here is, we receive men from the courts and they’re shipped out to other prisons quite quickly, so there is a fairly high turnover of prisoners so it is quite difficult to get a group of men who are going to be here for 5 weeks ... the chances are you would start with a group in week 1 and have a very different group by week 5” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

The unique nature and difficulties inherent in trying to facilitate Family Learning in prison settings was noted by other partners:

“It’s very difficult because prisons have their own systems and don’t all fit in with the learning. If anything is going off in the prison, people are locked down, you’ve got no control over it” (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

“The fact that the Lincoln prisoners are quite transient, people are moving in and out all the time, it’s difficult to know who’s going to be where, when” (Family Learning Co-ordinator, County Council).

The quick re-location of prisoners following release impacted upon the number of families who were able to attend sessions. Similarly, the prisoners were not always easily accessible. For example:

“In the end we only had one family, which was unfortunate. Because we have such a high turnover of prisoners here, this being a remand prison, we’d lose some of them in the few days before the actual taster day. It was really disappointing” (Prison Librarian).

“They have legal visits and they’re on trial, things you can’t move” (Prison Librarian).

Time involved in the delivery of the pilot project

Prison systems impacted greatly on the length of time it took prison staff to effectively facilitate Family Learning sessions. For prison staff, time was required for the initial project meetings, promotion, recruitment, security clearances and deciding whether prisoners were suitable, preparation such as resources, liaison with a tutor (if applicable), delivery and evaluation:

“The recruiting – two hours of that, then you’ve got to clear them with security and public protection, then you’ve got some no’s coming back, and you can’t just send a note to a guy saying ‘you can’t do it’, you’ve then got to spend the time to go and explain why he’s not allowed to go and he’ll be upset because it’s to do with his family” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

“Anything you do in the prison you’ve got to keep going back for, everyone forgets or goes onto the next thing, so you spend your time running around” (Prison Librarian).

“The grand total of hours was something crazy. About 14-15 hours work for a two-hour session. The recruiting... Then the normal preparation, making resources, getting permission... Clearing the tutor who came in to shadow it... Just to keep the guys engaged... if you don’t follow this up immediately before the session, the day before, sometimes they just forget” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

“Organising meetings for the group that were running the project, that’s hard to get everyone together” (Prison Librarian).

As one interviewee pointed out, what might appear a simple instruction such as providing refreshments in a session, a lot of time was required to ensure that this could happen:

“Buying them, getting them in through the gate... you know that’s going to be 45 minutes work to get all the paperwork and the permissions. But it’s important, it’s what made it nice for them, that they had orange and biscuits, it gave it a different feel” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

Partners working in the prisons were keen to point out that although the Family Learning was beneficial for the prisoners, organising programmes was incredibly time-consuming and subject to issues beyond their control:

“So although it’s very positive and when you do make it happen the guys get a lot out of it, it’s taken a lot to set up. A lot of clearances have to be gone through, a lot of procedures, things like getting in a tutor... Lots of hoops to jump through to make one two-hour session happen” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

“Mixed really. It’s always difficult to set things up in the prison because it’s difficult to get people together at any one time for meetings. People who work outside the prison don’t actually understand how difficult organising things in prison is for various reasons – logistics, etc.” (Prison Librarian).

Diversity of learners

An additional challenge, from a tutor’s perspective was the diversity of the learners themselves and their families. Offenders’ children were of different ages and numbers, whilst the offenders had different educational experiences and had been at the prison for different lengths of time:

“The main challenge of this type of group seemed to be the diversity of the learners, in age, level of education, numbers and ages of children, length of time at the prison etc... Anecdotally, their wives/partners and children differed too. One told us that his wife couldn’t read or write, which would prove to be an additional barrier to any letter writing activity. Another had children with ADHD and diagnosed as dyslexic” (Family Learning Tutor).

The challenges encountered by the families themselves was also noted in a community setting:

“The main challenge was convincing the families that they could operate the computers and programs” (Learning Bus Driver).

This tutor also discovered that some of the mothers didn't want to bring their children into the prison, which presents another difficulty. Similarly, the timing of the sessions may have deterred some parents, as one mother noted:

"8.30 is a bit too early and makes travelling slightly difficult" (Family at HMP Gartree).

The Relationship Between the Pilot Programme and Existing FLLN Programmes

The FLLN pilot project built upon ROWA!'s involvement as a *Skills for Families* partner in a 2005 national pathfinder on FLLN for offenders led by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). ROWA! delivered raising awareness workshops to prisoners and offenders in the community and also developed some materials for the BSA. ROWA! already had some contacts with prisons and Probation Services in the Derbyshire region and was keen to build on these relationships.

For those delivering the programmes, the FLLN pilot project complemented existing Family Learning provision delivered by local authorities. New College Nottingham, for example, who deliver Family Learning for the City of Nottingham, already worked with the Probation Service and provide literacy, language and numeracy in community settings. Similarly, Lincolnshire County Council's Family Learning Co-ordinator had already been involved in projects in the prison in the past and the Family Learning Service was keen to engage male learners, offenders and their families.

The prisons involved have much experience of family reading and a little of Family Learning. HMP Nottingham is involved in the Big Book Share³ (Phase 3 is running at present) funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The Big Book Share targets parents in prison and invites them to sessions in the prison where they may talk about and choose children's stories to record on tape for their children, which are sent home. In addition, the Education Department at HMP Nottingham have recently started delivering an Open College Network (OCN) Family Learning course. At HMP Lincoln, Storybook Dads⁴ is run where fathers record stories for their children and send them out. The stories may be edited using computer software and put onto a CD. Reading Together⁵ is also delivered at HMP Lincoln. Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Reading Together involves Lincolnshire Library Service and HMP Lincoln in partnership with local higher education institution Bishop Grosseteste College, encouraging male prisoners to maintain links with their family. A Reading Together children's collection has been established in the prison library enabling male carers to choose their books. A duplicate copy of the book is sent to the library closest to their family. Male carers and children then read the same book and write to each other about it. Reading Together encourages the use of both the prison and the public library.

³ http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/book_share.html

⁴ <http://www.storybookdads.co.uk/index.htm>

⁵ <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/phffund/Readingtogether.html>

Pilot Programme Content and Delivery Models

The pilot project had a number of approaches to facilitating Family Learning for prisoners and their families. ROWA! felt that a range of programmes was important to meet the needs of different prisoners and different communities. Three approaches were used - one was to develop prison and community partnerships to provide a prison and community model, a thematic model such as health or a bolt-on model, where provision complemented existing provision. There was some confusion amongst those interviewed as to what model their provision conformed to. Of those questioned, the bolt-on model appeared to be that which had been developed by partners and seemed to be the most practical approach. At HMP Nottingham it was initially hoped that a prison and community approach would be achievable where a course was provided for prisoners' partners in the community whilst the prisoners attended a course at the prison. Unfortunately, pressures of time meant that plans had to be adapted and the prison concentrated on a taster day and some modules for the prisoners.

It would appear that building on existing provision was the most efficient approach. The prison and community model was more ambitious, with greater numbers of partners and therefore subject to greater difficulties.

A number of programmes were also offered to provide a menu of learning opportunities. It is hard to judge which of the programmes was the most successful as interviewees were often involved with only one programme. Of those interviewed, *Working with my Family* had been the most used programme delivered alongside taster days:

"I was only involved in Keeping up with the kids ICT. This was well received by both offenders and families and also was given good support by the prison staff"
(Learning Bus Driver).

Teaching and Learning Materials

There were some mixed views over the programme materials provided by ROWA! for the sessions set in prison locations:

"Some of the materials that they were using I thought weren't particularly suitable and looked a bit dull" (Family Learning Co-ordinator, County Council).

"I would say as well that the material wasn't specifically designed for prison. For the separation that's being experienced by the dads" (Dad's Reading Prison Project Worker).

"I did like the idea of the stuff that they'd written specifically for prisons and people in prison... the stuff that ROWA! did was very sensitive and very appropriate" (Family Learning Co-ordinator, City Council).

The Impact of Pilot Programmes

Those involved in the pilot project felt that the Family Learning activities impacted positively upon offenders and their families. These primarily focussed on the opportunities available to offenders to strengthen their family relationships and engage with their children in learning activities. The pilot project also stimulated the offenders' interest in further learning. Overall, from the data considered it would appear that the pilot project had the greatest impact in relation to family relationships; giving offenders the time and tools to reflect upon their relationships with their children. Impacts in relation to health outcomes were not measured but partners felt very positively that the activities did make an impact upon offenders. Finally, the lack of access to offenders and their families by the evaluators meant that it was not possible to accurately track improvements in literacy, language and numeracy skills. The data used as part of the evaluation of the pilot project and the lack of any measurement tools to capture change means that these, whilst admittedly are positive, are merely suggested from the data rather than evidenced.

Reducing re-offending

Almost all of those interviewed felt that the pilot project had provided parents in prison with an opportunity to develop or redevelop family relationships thereby meeting one of the project's objectives. Similarly, they felt that offenders' families benefited from involvement in Family Learning. The relationship between family relationships and reducing re-offending is generally accepted, as a report from the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) noted:

"Maintaining family relationships can help to prevent prisoners re-offending and can assist them to successfully settle into the community" (2002, p.111).

" I think redeveloping family bonds was quite an important one (impact). Although they may have contact with the children it's not like living with them. Especially the ones with teenage children...If the offenders are repeat offenders they've missed a lot of their (children's) lives with their dads. That really showed, the fact that they could talk about it and talk about the things that they might have forgotten about each other" (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

The sessions delivered as part of the pilot project gave offenders both the time and an opportunity to contemplate their role as father and their family relationships:

"They said it had made them think about things a lot more, consider problems from another angle. They actually got the time to think about how it felt for their wives and their children" (Prison Librarian).

"I think they all said that the thing that they enjoyed the most was the time to discuss their children and their role as parents and discuss issues relating to family... they're often very interested to look at their role as dad and to take time out to think about how they can make a better job of being parents themselves. They're interested in the whole subject, which is really good, because they're desperately missing their families" (Dad's Reading Prison Project Worker).

This supports findings from the NFER evaluation of Family Learning programmes in prison where it was noted that the impact on fathers more reported was a change in attitude to the paternal role:

“Prisoners made comments relating to a reassessment of their priorities, a realisation of the importance of the father’s role, or a greater awareness and acceptance of parental responsibilities” (Halsey et al 2004, p.3).

Similarly, one of the impacts that emerged in the evaluation of the Safe Ground programme was that offenders developed understanding of the needs and perspectives of others:

“Prisoners admitted at times they were selfish, dwelling on their own problems and gave little thought to how their families were feeling. However, the course had encouraged them to think beyond themselves” (Halsey et al 2002, p.7).

The pilot also gave the partners of offenders an opportunity to reflect, for example, during the pampering session at HMP Nottingham. Offenders’ partners were also able to share their experiences with those in the same situation which may help to reduce their isolation.

Offenders were also able to interact with their children and engage in learning activities together. They considered how they could help their children and there was some indication from the K’NEX session in particular that the fathers were hoping to continue using the K’NEX equipment with their children once they returned home. ROWA! hoped to encourage parents to support their children’s learning and this objective appears to have been fulfilled.

“The prisoners who attended the FLLN taster session delivered by myself thoroughly enjoyed the session and were very engaged with their families in the task” (ROWA! Project Worker).

“It was quite clear that they enjoyed the visits far more as well because the Dad was more prepared to do the things with the children. Actively, took a role in playing with the children” (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

One programme involved fathers creating a card to send to their children in which they wrote a special message, which as this quote suggests may have boosted the self-esteem of the children involved:

“Lots of dads here send letters and cards to their children all the time but some might not and it might have been the first time of getting something from their dad. So their self-esteem would have been raised, hopefully, which is the point of the session” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

It would be interesting to know whether the activity mentioned above encouraged fathers to contact their children more following the pilot project. For example, the NFER evaluation noted that involvement in Family Learning had a positive impact on family contact; there were more frequent exchange of letters and phone calls (Halsey et al 2004).

The sessions provided offenders and their families with an occasion to undertake family activities in an environment that was more pleasant for the families, for example, in the prison library, on the Learning Bus or with refreshments provided:

“They were visiting dad in a normal sort of environment, as normal as you can get. The taster day took place in the library so it could have been any library, anywhere” (Prison Librarian).

“I believe that the families also benefited from involvement in family learning as they were able to engage with their partners/parents/children in a fun, fairly relaxed learning environment. One prisoner commented that ‘the best part of the session had been spending time with his family’” (ROWA! Project Worker).

Similarly, visiting the ROWA! Learning Bus in a community setting also provided a different environment for offenders and families and families may feel more favourable about visiting the mobile than entering a local community venue:

“I consider that the prisoners benefited from the chance to work on projects with their children in a stress less environment and the children could also show their IT skills which they may have learnt whilst the parent had been absent. The prisoners also encouraged the children in their learning so this helped to form stronger bonds... When listening to offenders/families whilst on the mobile project there seems to be a lot of favourable comments that they feel more at ease on the mobile project than in local community education centres as they all have very similar problems so no one looks down on them and they can chat about their problems with like minded people” (Learning Bus Driver).

Improvements in family relationships were identified in the pilot project possibly because of quality interaction between prisoners and their families. This supports the findings of the NFER’s evaluation:

“Some interviewees reported that families had been brought closer together through family learning. Even though contact time was limited, the nature of interaction during the sessions meant that families were spending better quality time together than they had done previously” (Halsey et al 2004, p.3).

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of underachievement through Family Learning

Comments from partners working in prisons and the community suggest that the pilot project was successful in stimulating the interest of offenders and their families in more learning:

“I did receive a phone call from a prisoner who was involved in one of the workshops. He had since been released and called me about further family learning/parenting programmes that he was interested in. He spoke very highly of the workshop and how it had given him a taster of what was possible and quite clearly wanted to carry on learning” (Family Learning Co-ordinator, City Council).

“They all said yes, they would attend if we ran anything else, they would come back” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

Similarly, in the community setting it was noted:

“The families have benefited by being able to help the offender to consider further education on offer and the offender has been able to encourage the families into learning in their local community as both groups found a common interest in ICT” (Learning Bus Driver).

Indeed, comments from offenders’ families mainly refer to a desire to engage in further learning:

“Thoroughly enjoyed the morning. More of the same please. Maybe in the fresh air. Thanks” (Family at HMP Gartree).

“Very well organised, good interaction with the family – made fun and interesting for all ages. Pleasant to have a relaxed atmosphere – unlike normal visits. Have at least one of these every month. Something for the children to look forward to... especially during the summer holidays. Maybe have a day visit” (Family at HMP Gartree).

Improved health outcomes

Like all the impacts explored by the evaluators in this study, gains or improvements are difficult to measure. Project partners’ perceptions in relation to health improvements were optimistic and they hoped that the involvement would impact positively on offenders’ and their families’ health but it would be hard to state categorically that ROWA! had met its aim of improving the physical and mental health of offenders and their families. What can be asserted is that the pilot project appeared to sow the seeds for improvements in health through the provision of information and activities exploring health issues:

“Because we’ve got a mixture of age ranges, we looked at some of the things certainly on ‘why do children need parents’, we looked at some health issues round there regarding drugs. Yes I do think it makes an impact, a huge one” (Community Programmes Manager, FE College).

“I think it was emotional health, yes... Taking the time out to work on family matters makes them feel better about family... an issue is self harming and I know with my Reading Together project, this focus on family and feeling that they’re doing something positive, and having activities to do around the family, reduces that. We have had self-harmers saying that it’s really helping me to stop” (Dad’s Reading Prison Project Worker).

The Limitations of the Evaluation

A relatively short time frame was set aside for the evaluation. A lead person was identified to co-ordinate the evaluation of the project and a project plan was outlined in March 2006. A project review was undertaken in April and presented to ROWA! and the evaluators in May 2006. Initial fieldwork arrangements to undertake a focus group with providers and partners in Leicester in May 2006 were altered to take into account the changing timetable of events, which had slipped to July 2006. It was agreed that telephone interviews with partners and providers was a suitable alternative and that these should be carried out after events had taken place so that the data collected would be richer. Interviews with partners and providers were scheduled for two weeks in August – weeks commencing 14th and 21st August.

Twenty-three contacts including partners working in prisons, probation, colleges, local authorities, LSC, ROWA! and other organisations including Sure Start, a Primary Care Trust and Campaign for Learning were emailed requesting their participation in the interviews. Subsequent follow up emails were sent in late August and early September.

In spite of the timing of the interviews during the summer holidays, six detailed telephone interviews were undertaken and recorded with project staff. In addition, a further three partners completed the interview questions and emailed them to project staff. Those responding included two Family Learning co-coordinators, three prison staff, three ROWA! staff and one partner from a local college. Unfortunately, no partners from the Probation Service were involved in the data collection stage. The findings in relation to the community aspects of the pilot must therefore be treated with caution. However, a number of other partners did comment on their relationship with the Probation Service and the activities planned and undertaken with offenders and their families in the community.

Interviews with learners and families at Nottingham Prison and a focus group with probationers on the ROWA! Learning Bus were also subject to change. Unfortunately the taster day at Nottingham Prison was cancelled because it failed to recruit. Similarly, there had been only a small number of learners making use of the ROWA! Learning Bus. The Project Development Worker suggested the evaluators visit a local prison in July; however, prison staff were reluctant to have too many outside agencies at events. The Project Development Worker did, however, aim to capture as much information as possible at events and pass this to the evaluators. This was considered a useful source of data for the evaluation team. The trip to the Learning Bus was also cancelled due to the driver being off work on the particular date it was arranged. There were also issues about arranging interviews with learners as the prisoners were constantly moved and getting hold of them after events was difficult.

Although three types of data were used for the evaluation – interview transcripts, feedback and evaluation forms from the partners and documentation from ROWA!, more interviews with project partners would have provided additional information and perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot project. Access to prisoners and their families would have provided the project team with a greater sense of the kinds of impacts this work was having. Since much of this evaluation relies on secondary evidence, its findings must be seen as indicative.

Conclusions

This report has presented the evaluation findings of the *FLLN For Offenders: A Regional Pilot Project Managed By ROWA!* The aims of the project included a reduction in re-offending; breaking intergenerational cycles of underachievement; and improving the physical and mental health of offenders and their families – all through Family Learning. The evaluation findings suggest that these aims are achievable but require further evidence particularly that drawn from longitudinal tracking of those involved.

The project objectives have in most cases been met. The evaluation findings have revealed that the effect of the FLLN sessions and tasters, according to partners, was a strengthening of family relationships and it is hoped that this may, in turn, reduce re-offending rates. The pilot project provided offenders with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds and parents were encouraged to support their children's learning development, which may break intergenerational cycles of underachievement. The pilot project activities included elements of literacy, language and numeracy and most of the partners interviewed felt that an improvement in these skills was achievable. However, without accurate measurement in the development of such skills before, during and after the pilot project it is difficult to state that this objective has been met. Again, anecdotal evidence such as offenders feeling confident enough to write a letter to their children, particularly, when this was an activity some of them would not normally engage in suggests some improvement. However, evidence to develop a broader knowledge of activities that meet the needs of males and females was not forthcoming from the data collected.

The pilot project successfully engaged a large number of offenders in Family Learning but was less successful in terms of the number of families involved. However, it would be fair to state that the project has made a good start in making contacts with appropriate partners in prisons and the community, in raising awareness of the value of Family Learning and generating willingness amongst staff involved. These foundations can be built on in the future. ROWA! assembled a very large number of partners for involvement in the project and it would appear that in the majority of cases, these partnerships worked together successfully. The data suggested that the partnerships with the Probation Service were the weakest and this appeared to negatively impact on the community aspects of the pilot project.

Project staff encountered challenges presented by the nature of the prison system itself and although plans were reshaped and in some cases, events cancelled, by and large FLLN tasters and sessions were delivered and delivered successfully, often building on the strengths of prison staff already used to facilitating Family Learning activity. Recruitment was also a challenging activity and sometimes demoralising, particularly for those unfamiliar with the prison system. What did emerge was the value of the personal approach in engaging offenders and their families.

The evaluation has revealed that the impacts on offenders and their families were often what are considered 'softer outcomes' such as improvements in relationships, a desire to engage in further learning and raised self-esteem. However, these softer outcomes often permit the development of harder outcomes such as improvements

in literacy, language and numeracy. A more research-focussed study concentrating on improvements in literacy, language and numeracy in any future offender projects would add to the body of evidence in relation to the positive impacts upon offenders and their families offered by Family Learning.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations emerged during the evaluation, which may improve the quality of future FLLN activity with offenders and their families:

Project Planning, Promotion and Recruitment

- A project worker situated within a prison to co-ordinate Family Learning activity/work is crucial. A member of staff experienced in working with offenders who knows how to best approach and engage with offenders and their families and is conversant with the prison procedures required to facilitate such events is a necessity⁶;
- Learning and skills providers should be made familiar with the security arrangements involved in setting up a FLLN programme in prison. Greater awareness and understanding of security issues and movement of prisoners might help shape more realistic expectations of all those involved at the beginning of such a project. For example, to counter prisoners moving around at a short notice, a course could take place over one week e.g. a session every morning;
- More time needs to be built into programme planning and funding to reflect the challenges involved in setting up a new programme such as the time it takes to develop relationships;
- In order to increase recruitment amongst the families of prisoners it may be advantageous to arrange Family Learning activities for the mums/partners at the prison on the same day as the visits as some families are reliant on public transport and not located in the immediate vicinity of the prison;
- Access to a mobile or learning bus such as the one employed by ROWA! can be a useful approach in engaging the families of offenders in community settings as well as prisons to counter feelings of intimidation that some families feel when faced with entering local community venues;
- Involving partners such as voluntary and community organisations already working in the community and with expertise in engaging with families can be advantageous when it comes to recruitment;
- Enabling offender learners to become FLLN learning champions may help with recruitment.

⁶ This reflects the findings of the NFER evaluation of family learning programmes where they noted that “*The appointment of a dedicated coordinators was also felt to be beneficial – someone with the time and enthusiasm to establish the programme within the prison*” (Halsey et al 2004, p.5).

Pilot Programme Content and Delivery Models

- Programme material could be more tailored to the realities of family life for offenders;
- Ice breakers at the start of sessions may make the learning environment more comfortable for offenders as would greater explanation and information for offenders as to the purpose of the sessions;
- It may be appropriate to develop sessions tailored to offenders who have older children.

Further Research and Evaluation

- Research is required to explore the relationship between strengthening family relationships as a result of offenders and their families involvement in Family Learning and re-offending rates;
- A longitudinal research study tracking the improvements in literacy, language and numeracy for offenders and their families prior to and post Family Learning involvement would lend the research evidence in this field greater weight;
- Similarly, research is required which explores the impacts of Family Learning programmes on the health and well-being of offenders prior to and post Family Learning involvement;
- The complexities of the criminal justice system make it difficult to draft in partners at a later stage therefore the involvement of evaluators, for example, at initial meetings may permit greater opportunities for access to offenders and their families thereby creating more opportunities for data collection;
- The benefits of 'word of mouth' recruitment to Family Learning should be explored further;
- More research is required to ascertain what works with different types of offenders in terms of recruitment – to identify whether there is a need to differentiate between gender, age and length of sentence.

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Appendices

**Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders -
A Regional Pilot Project managed by Read On Write Away!**

Telephone Interview Schedule for NIACE Evaluation

Name:

Organisation:

Contact details (Telephone No. & E-mail address):

Date undertaken:

Background

- 1. How has your organisation been involved in the FLLN for Offenders Pilot Project? (Consider when they became involved, their role, the role of their organisation's, what they hoped to contribute/gain)**
- 2. What have been your experiences of setting up the programme(s)? (Consider cultural/organisational issues, partnership working/developing relationships, difficulties and successes)**

Family learning

- 1. How does the Offenders Pilot Project fit in with your existing family learning provision? (Consider whether they have had any previous involvement in the area of family learning with offenders)**
- 2. How has the family learning activity been promoted to prisoners/offenders? (Consider recruitment methods and which were the most/least successful)**
- 3. How has the family learning activity been promoted to their families? (Consider recruitment methods and which were the most/least successful)**
- 4. In your opinion, which family learning model is the most successful and which is the most problematic? (i.e. prison and community model/thematic model/a bolt-on model)**
- 5. In your opinion, which programme has been the most successful? (Consider health sacks, working with my family, keeping up with the kids ICT and the FLLN Taster day)**

6. What challenges have you encountered in rolling out family learning to prisoners/offenders and their families?

Impacts

1. Do you feel that prisoners/offenders have benefited from involvement in family learning? (Consider whether their involvement would reduce re-offending, support their children's learning, develop their parenting skills, strengthen family bonds, develop LLN skills)
2. Do you feel that prisoners'/offenders' families have benefited from involvement in family learning? (Consider whether their involvement might break intergenerational cycles of under-achievement, support their children's learning, develop their parenting skills, strengthen family bonds, develop LLN skills)
3. Do you think that involvement in family learning will improve the health of prisoners/offenders and their families? (Consider impacts on mental and physical health)

The future

1. If this project were rolled out nationally, what are the main issues that need to be taken on board?
2. Finally, do you have any further comments you wish to make about the FLLN for Offenders Pilot Project?

**Rachel Spacey
Bethia McNeil**

NIACE

List of evidence for ROWA! Evaluation

NIACE documentation

- Project Review undertaken March 2006
- Telephone interview transcripts – 6
- Completed interview questions by email – 3
- Email from Sure Start Aspley

Feedback/evaluation forms

- ROWA family learning workshop HMP Lincoln 24 July 2006 – feedback report from tutor
- Email with feedback to Sarah Benson following the *Working with my Family* session at HMP Lincoln
- Evaluation reports from HMP Gartree Evaluation dated 24th and 25th July 2006 including comments from families
- Summary attendance of events received by email from Sarah Benson 28 July 06 version 1
- Summary attendance of events received by email from Sarah Benson Sep 06 version 2
- Reading Dads: a celebration of Family Learning evaluation. July 10th – 21st 2006 at HMP Leicester
- Email to Sarah Benson from the library manager at HMP Leicester August 18th 2006

ROWA! documentation

- Contacts for prison and probation FLLN pilot project in the East Midlands
- Timetable of events
- Action plan January 2006 to July 2006 Prison and Probation
- *ROWA! goes to prison* update from the ROWA! website
- *Working with My Family* Session 4 'Supporting My Family' materials
- *Working with My Family* Session 1 'Getting to Know Each Other' materials
- *Working with My Family* Session 3 'Numeracy' materials
- *Working with My Family* Session 5 'Who will support me?' materials
- Overview of pilot family learning in prisons - report from Sarah Benson, July 2006
- *FLLN at Nottingham Prison and in the Community* - PowerPoint presentation for training professionals
- Health sacks for Aspley course materials
- K'NEX Family Numeracy course materials
- K'NEX Challenge
- Project photos

Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy for Offenders A Regional Pilot Project Managed by Read On Write Away!

Project Review

Background

Rowa!, an Independent Partnership which aims to improve literacy and basic skills in Derbyshire and Derby City, was asked by the LSC Nottinghamshire in autumn 2005 to develop and manage a pilot programme in family literacy, language and numeracy, focusing on health, for offenders in secure and community settings. This project is part of a national LSC initiative developing a number of family learning 'prototypes' that can be rolled out more widely once they have piloted and evaluated.

Context for the Project

Family learning is increasingly recognised as an important approach in the rehabilitation of offenders. The government's Green Paper (2005) on offenders, *Reducing Offending through Skills and Employment*, argues that developing offenders' skills and employability is central to bringing down rates of re-offending and enabling offenders to gain employment. The Paper notes that family learning is an effective strategy for strengthening relationships between offenders and their families.

The reform of services for offenders has gathered pace over the past few years. A new agency, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was created in 2004 following recommendations in the Carter Review for Correctional Services, 'Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime' (2004). NOMS focuses on the 'end-to-end management' of offenders, ensuring greater continuity in the services provided for offenders. In 2004 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was given responsibility for the planning and funding of learning and skills for offenders. In the East Midlands region there are 5 LSCs: Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

In 2005 the national initiative *Skills for Families*, managed by the Basic Skills Agency, undertook a pathfinder project on family literacy, language and numeracy for offenders. ROWA!, as a *Skills for Families* partner project, was involved in this national pathfinder. Recognising the importance of family learning for offenders, ROWA! was keen to develop its expertise in this area.

Project Rationale

The project is part of a national initiative whereby a small number of family learning 'prototypes' for offenders and their families are developed. The intention in developing prototypes is to roll out successful approaches nationally once they are developed and piloted. The LSC Nottinghamshire asked ROWA! to focus on health issues in the development of their family literacy, language and numeracy prototype.

The project is working in 5 settings:

- Foston Hall (Derbyshire) – a secure establishment for women,
- Lincoln Prison (Lincolnshire) – Category B, remand,
- Nottingham Prison (Nottinghamshire) - Category B, remand,
- Gartree Prison (Leicestershire) - Intermediate Public Protection,
- Onley Prison (Northamptonshire) - YOI, male adult, category C.

The settings were chosen by the LSC Nottinghamshire for their diversity.

Project Aims

The aims of the project are to:

- Reduce re-offending,
- Break intergenerational cycles of under-achievement through family learning,
- Improve the physical and mental health of offenders and their families.

Project Objectives

The objectives are to:

- Provide prisoners with opportunities to retain and strengthen family bonds,
- Encourage parents to support their children's learning development,
- Develop good parenting skills,
- Develop a broader knowledge of activities that meet the needs of males and females,
- Further develop literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents in secure and community contexts.

Outcomes and outputs

- 30 staff trained through family learning raising awareness training,
- 4 new family learning programmes developed,
- 30 prisoners take part in family learning programmes,
- 30 offenders and their families take part in family learning programmes,
- a project evaluation undertaken, report produced and disseminated.

Timescale

The project was commissioned in autumn 2005, started in January 2006 and was meant to have concluded in July 2006. Due to a delay in the piloting phase, the end date has been extended to August 2006 to enable completion of the evaluation.

Project Staff

Karen Hanson, ROWA! Family Learning Manager and Project Manager
Sarah Benson, .4 Project Development Worker, ROWA!

The Development Worker's post, originally .2, was increased to take account of the development work required for the project.

Project Steering Group

This includes:

Andrew Price, LSC Nottinghamshire,
Representative of Lincolnshire and Rutland LSC,
Karen Hansen, Project Manager and Family Learning Manager, ROWA!.

The project is maintaining a link with Alex Johnson, Head of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit, DfES.

Partners

The role of ROWA! is to manage the project and to develop training and materials. The family learning programmes will be delivered through its partners who deliver family learning in the region. These include:

- New College Nottingham,
- West Notts College.

Other regional partners include a number of community agencies and organisations that will ensure the project is embedded in communities and therefore sustainable.

National partners include NIACE, who is undertaking the project evaluation, and Campaign for Learning, who is undertaking a *Family Learning Sustainability Study* which will explore issues preventing the development and delivery of sustainable family learning provision for offenders and examine how family learning can effectively be integrated into mainstream learning provision for offenders.

Project Strands

There are 5 project strands:

strand 1 – infrastructure,
strand 2 – training and capacity building,
strand 3 – programme and materials development and programme delivery,
strand 4 – evaluation,
strand 5 – dissemination.

Models of Provision

Three models are being developed for piloting:

- a *prison and community* model,
- a *thematic* model (not linked to a local community),
- a *bolt-on model* (building on existing prison provision, activities).

FLLN Programmes

There are four programmes, each with a health focus:

Health Sacks,
Working with My Family,
Keeping Up With the Kids ICT,

Piloting

Piloting in Gartree Prison and Nottingham Prison will begin in July. Dates for piloting the programmes in the three other prisons is yet to be confirmed.

Early themes and issues to emerge

The review touched on several issues and themes likely to be developed through the evaluation, including:

- the time required for building relationships with partner organisations,
- need to acknowledge and bring together the different cultures of the sectors involved (e.g. prisons, PCTs and the VCS),
- need to encourage prison staff to prioritise the training offered,
- difficulty of bringing prison staff together, in part because of high staff turnover,
- role of senior management in prisons is key, but not enough in itself to make things happen there,
- importance of embedding work in the community,
- need for all partners to acknowledge the amount of time it takes to engage and motivate learners, and time also to work with communities (ROWA! knowledge and experience important here),
- need to acknowledge the amount of development work ROWA! has put into building relationships with prison staff and probation services,
- role of family learning co-ordinators as gatekeepers,
- young offenders are a unique group of parents as they are essentially 'child-like' themselves,
- building relationships between probation services and the community,
- way that the pilot supports the vision for NOMS in ensuring the seamless management of offender services, linking community, PCT and probation,
- sustainability – ROWA! committed to involving the community to ensure sustainability.

Fieldwork arrangements

Activity	Date	Staff involved
Focus group with providers and partners in Leicester	Letter of invitation sent by ROWA! wb 15 May	ROWA!; RS
	Convened wb 5 June	RS; BM
Interviews with learners and families at Nottingham Prison	End of June	SB; RS; BM
	ROWA! to send letter	
Focus group with <i>Keeping Up with the Kids</i> group (probationers) on ROWA! learning bus, Aspley	Mid-July	SB; RS
	ROWA! to send letter	

Dissemination of the evaluation

Decisions on how best to disseminate the final evaluation report are yet to be made, as the budget is limited for this activity.

Supporting documentation

1. Prison and Probation Family Pathfinder Project: Summary Evaluation Report. June 2005.
2. Project Action Plan Jan 06 – July 06. 30 August 2005.
3. Meeting with Christine Ford and Helen Coombes. 6 January 2006.
4. Prison and Probation Service Project Planning Meeting. 31 January 2006.
5. Notes of Prison and Probation Service Project Planning Meeting, 31 January 2006.
6. Proposal to Alex Johnson, Head of OLASS Unit, DfES, for funding for a stage 2 (tracking) project. February 2006.
7. Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy in prison and community. Powerpoint presentation. Undated.
8. Prison and Probation Regional LSC Project, Wednesday March 8th, Agenda. (Steering Group meeting?).
9. Excerpts from Derbyshire StAR. Undated.
10. Greg Brooks, suggested questions for 'tracked' Family Literacy/Numeracy parents. 03 December 2003.

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05 May 2006

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