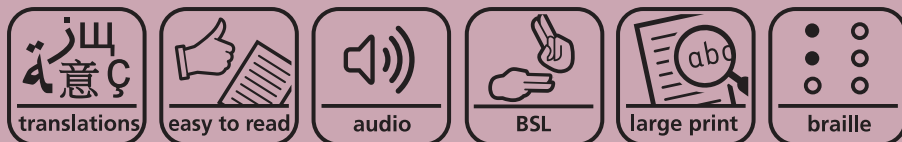




Community justice practice  
spotlight summary 2  
HMP Shotts – Family Time Project

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# Background

For children with a parent in custody, the loss may be similar to that of bereavement. Therefore, it can be assumed that these children have suffered some level of trauma associated with either the temporary loss of their parent or with experiencing the arrest of the parent itself. Children can suffer a range of problems during their parent's imprisonment, such as depression, hyperactivity, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, clinging behaviours, sleep problems and other associated mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>

Given this research, the Getting Better Together Ltd project within Shotts Healthy Living Centre is working in partnership with NHS Lanarkshire and HMP Shotts to deliver a Family Time Project for families in the visits centre. The Family Time Project aims to promote positive parent-child relationships to decrease the anxiety the child may experience during the visit; therefore, providing an environment where the child feels safe and connected to the father, and improving knowledge and awareness of different health topics. The sessions are based on structured play/storytelling with subtle health messages throughout.

## Leadership and good practice

The Family Time Project creates a safe, nurturing environment for the family unit. The sessions have a number of benefits for both the child and father. They also have benefits for the family unit as a whole, such as improved relationships, confidence, and health and wellbeing, and getting to spend quality time together in an otherwise stressful and restricted environment. The fathers who participate in the sessions have all reported positive experiences:

'Thank you for all the amazing memories you have helped us create over the last 12 months. Your programme has allowed us to have a small part of normal family life which we will never forget.'

'The programme that we participated in was absolutely fantastic. The activities were great for the kids and adults too! You can tell a lot of time and effort preparing

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<sup>1</sup> Boswell G, Wedge P, Paylor I. Imprisoned fathers and their children. *Child & Family Social Work* 2002;7(4):324-5.

them was put in. They made our family visits more fun and entertaining! And we couldn't have asked for two nicer people to share our visits. No judgements were ever made on why we were there and for once we were just treated like normal people and I know that that's made a huge difference to our visiting experiences.'

A workshop is carried out with all dads before the sessions so they can input on what they would specifically like included in their programme.

## Reflections and learning opportunities

- It has been highlighted that the Family Time Project would benefit more families if the sessions were delivered on the weekend. However, due to staff availability at these times, this has yet to be achieved.
- There is scope for the success of the work of the Family Time Project to be carried on outside the prison.
- Better use of the family time sessions/visits area could be used for signposting families to health services.

## Key benefits and success observed

This project promotes a set of positive learning opportunities:

- effective partnership working between HMP Shotts, Getting Better Together Ltd and NHS Lanarkshire Health Improvement
- a nurturing environment for the child/family
- improved relationships with families and Getting Better Together Shotts/Lanarkshire Health Improvement
- improved positive and safe bonding between father/carer and child
- increased confidence of father/carer interacting with child
- improved knowledge and awareness on different health topics for both father/carer and child.

This summary was produced by the Health Improvement & Justice Practice Collaboration Group. For more information, please contact **denisegbtshotts@gmail.com**

