

HOME SECRETARY (CHARLES CLARKE) PAYS A LAST MINUTE VISIT TO POPS HEAD OFFICE

On Friday 10th February 2006, the Home Secretary (Charles Clarke) visited the POPS Head Office on his way to the Annual Labour Party Conference held this year in Blackpool.

This visit stemmed from a meeting the Home Secretary had two weeks prior with POPS' CEO Farida Anderson, MBE. This meeting sparked up an interest in the services that POPS provides to families of offenders and the Home Secretary requested a visit be scheduled at short notice.

The Home Secretary stated that he had requested the visit on Friday to enable him to 'Paint a fuller picture' by meeting POPS' staff, managers, volunteers and Board members, face-to-face in their own environment.

The visit was extremely successful and the Home Secretary spent an hour

and a half chatting, soaking up the atmosphere and generally finding out as much as he could about the impact this medium sized charity was having on a local, regional and national level

'...I am fascinated in the work you do with offenders' families and this visit was for me to learn more... I am committed to supporting you in your strive to raise awareness of the issues, that are currently affecting families who are supporting a loved one in prison...'

Home Secretary (POPS, Manchester, 2006)

Zoë Gan—Corporate Development Manager



From left to right Farida Anderson MBE (CEO), Home Secretary Charles Clarke, Diane Curry (Director), Zoë Gan (Corporate Development Manager). In the reception at POPS Head Office



From left to right Farida Anderson MBE (CEO), Debbie Barrow (Family Link Worker) and Home Secretary Charles Clarke

NEWS FROM THE FINANCE OFFICE...

Myself and David are both amazed to think that we have worked at POPS for over a year.

We have recently begun the use of online banking services that will facilitate direct payment of staff expenses and invoices from regular suppliers. At the moment David with the support from myself is preparing schedules for the year end (March 2006) and David feels confident in this process with the knowledge he has filing and administrative procedures in place.

Having recently issued the Business Expense Claims Policy and Procedures we are turning our focus on future updates in financial controls, some of these include the implementation of the newly agreed pension policy contribution and development of procedures and policy for the Tea Bar standard pricing, control of stock and cash handling.

Finally budgets for the next financial year (April 2006 - March 2007) are at the final stages of development.

David and I both look forward to our 2nd year with POPS.... I am hoping to avoid finding anymore grey hairs whilst David is hoping not to lose any more grey hairs!!!

Margaret Vaughan—Finance Administrator

FAMILY LINKS DAYS WITH POPS

Family Days on unit 5 (HIT) HMYOI Thorn Cross

As Family Link Worker I recognise that having a loved one in custody can be a very difficult time for families and friends. It is my job to try and maintain the ties between the prisoner and his family throughout the duration of his sentence by offering advice, guidance and support, and encouraging family involvement. One such initiative is the 'Family Day' whereby families are invited into Thorn Cross by myself and Governor Diane Cass. These days are an opportunity to watch the weekly Governors Inspection Parade and attend the Community Meeting which gives the family members a chance to listen to the beneficiaries interact with each other and the staff. Once this is over, Governor Cass speaks to the families about the HIT programme and how it works, including an explanation and chance to see 'Billy's House', the Independent Living Unit. The families are also able, whilst enjoying the refreshments, to mingle with the Unit staff and have a look inside the beneficiaries 'pad' prior to a tour around the workshops and education block. Overall, the purpose of the Family Day is to raise family's awareness of the HIT program and provide them with a clearer insight of how the regime is structured and the benefits it will have in aiding positive resettlement. These days are also extremely important for the beneficiaries....



"At first I thought - no way do I want my family to come see me marching. I didn't fancy the idea at all. I spoke with Julie, the Family Link Worker, and told her how I missed my family as they can't visit as often now I'm here because the journey is too far. I admitted I felt bad about not seeing my mum. Julie contacted my mum and invited her to the family day out. When I came out onto the parade ground and saw my mum, brother and two sisters I was really shocked but really pleased. My family met with the Governor and we had a photograph taken which Julie has sent to my mum. I feel the family days are very important and give you a boost and a bit more motivation to do well so you don't let your family down." ...Michael

Julie O'Rourke—Family Link Worker

"Dads special visits" Family Days at HMYOI Hindley (December 2005)

Fifteen young dads, eleven young adults and four juveniles, participated in the special afternoon event during the run up to the Christmas holidays. There were 22 children ranging from a few weeks old to 6 years, alongside 23 family members including girlfriends/partners to grandmas and granddads who brought the children up for the visit.

Staff from the learning and skills centre carried out a dad's reading/story tapes session. This entailed each dad reading a story "Guess how much I love you?"..... on to a tape, which was given (alongside a copy of the book) to each child by Father Christmas. For those young people with literacy difficulties or who didn't wish to do this, a member of the learning and skills staff assisted. The majority of dads were keen to read the books themselves! And included a personal Christmas message to their own child.

Staff and young people from the juvenile catering course both prepared and served refreshments and also produced menus as part of their course-work. Goodies included a range of sandwiches, sausage rolls, pasties, trifles, chocolate crispy cakes also hot and cold drinks.

The POPS Play worker from HMP Risley assisted our two play workers and a member of the probation team with activities for children and dads, including face- painting, hand- printing, toys and play equipment, pass the parcel, making reindeer cakes and a Christmas card for dad!

The visits Senior Officer graciously came in on his afternoon off to become Father Christmas and to give out the gifts to each child and a box of chocolates for mum or grand- parent!

Feedback from young people, families, children and staff has been really positive. One young person felt so strongly about the event, he wrote a piece about how it had impacted on him and improved the relationship with his daughter. The "success" of this event in terms of parenting, family ties, decency, resettlement and the well being of young people, made all the hard work worthwhile!

Angela Boland—Family Link Worker

'THE POWER WITHIN'

The National Body of Black Prisoner Support Groups' 4th National Conference ~ Bristol

The National Body of Black Prisoner Support Groups' S.E.E.D. 4 B.M.E. project held its 4th National Conference in Bristol (January 2006) called 'The Power Within'. The aim of this conference was to address the Sustainability, Engagement, Empowerment and Development of B.M.E. Voluntary and Community Sector organisations providing services to B.M.E. offenders, within the Criminal Justice System.

Using the theme of 'The Power Within' and a collective approach to service delivery the conference hoped to begin to raise awareness and stimulate discussion on the management of Black Offenders, which had been outlined in the National Reducing Re-offending Action Plan. The event was Chaired by Val Mitchell Clarke (ABPO) and had prestigious speakers like Fiona McTaggart (MP), Kevin Lockyer (SW ROM) and our own Diane Curry (POPS Director). The conference was a two day event with a evening dinner dance sandwiched in the middle. Farida Anderson MBE (POPS CEO) made a surprise appearance as she had been asked to be the guest evening speaker. Farida gave an inspirational presentation about her life experiences and how we all have 'The Power Within' to achieve our goals.

The conference also had workshops delivered on the following themes: - BME Mental Health & Offenders, A Question of Faith, Issues for Foreign Nationals, Providing Quality Services and Importance of Offenders Families.

As well as POPS being involved in giving presentations, workshops and helping with the administration of the event we also launch the draft version on our '**Diverse Maps**' CD-rom. National Probation Service commissioned POPS to develop and create a training tool (in the form of a CD-rom) which could be used by Probation staff to raise their awareness with regards to diversity. POPS believes that we have created an interactive training tool which can be transferred across the Criminal Justice System and could be relevant to many agencies. This CD-rom will be completed in Early April 2006.

The post conference feedback was extremely positive and we believe that its aims were achieved. The conference has paved the way for good partnerships to be made, information to be shared and BME agencies to gain support from the National Body of Black Prisoners Support Groups. We look forward to the next conference!

Zoë Gan—Corporate Development Manager

FUTURE VISITOR CENTRE GRAND OPENING DAYS.

The beginning of the new financial year will bring with it a new corporate image for our Visitor Centres. Throughout April and May we will be holding a Grand Open day at each of our 6 Visitor Centres to launch the new uniforms, Visitor Centre signs and staff photo boards.

We are hoping the days will be a chance for POPS to:-

- Celebrate the work we have been doing in our Visitor Centres
- Give our Visitor Centre staff a chance to see how other Visitor Centres function
- Promote our services to other agencies in the prisons we work in
- Thank our Visitor Centre staff of all their hard work during this recent time of change management
- And look forward to the future development of our POPS Visitors Centres in new and innovative ways, which meet the needs of offenders families



New Visitor Centre Signs

The dates of these Grand Opening days have not yet been finalised, but I will be informing all staff of the details as soon as I have confirmation of the arrangements.

Grace Kay—Outreach Development Manager

PRISONERS FAMILIES HELPLINE...0808 808 2003

In the first month of 2006 we took just over 500 calls on the Prisoners' Families Helpline.

The surprising thing is that only one of these callers found out about the Helpline from the Visitors' Centre at their prison! Fortunately the Helpline will be re-publicised in the near future and new leaflets and posters will be available to promote the service. All those Centres not already displaying information will have the opportunity to promote it where it's really needed. In the meantime, if any of your Centres need any extra posters or leaflets then please call Jamal or Ali at Head Office who will send some out to you.

The majority of callers to the Helpline want information about visiting a specific prison. As a response to this we have contacted every prison to request up to date information on domestic visits. The response to this request has been quite positive. We are also looking to recruit volunteers to staff the helpline and to promote the service to families from B.M.E communities.

For the future, we are looking at ways to ensure our information is available in the local courts so that families can have access to support at the point of sentencing when they most need it. The future's bright... the future's orange and grey!

Alicia Craythorne—Family Caseworker and
Jamal Anderson—Floating Support Worker

'EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL' Conference—Birmingham November 2005

The 'Exploring the Potential' Conference was a joint conference held by Action for Prisoners Families and POPS. The theme of the conference was exploring the potential of the Family Link Worker and getting back to basis with the essence of the role. The day was aimed at getting practicing Family Link Workers, both Prison Officer and Voluntary sector agency workers, to share information and good practice amongst themselves.

We had presentations from Family Link Works across the country e.g.

- Family Liaison at HMP Durham
- POPS Family Link Workers NW
- PACT Family Contact & First Night in Custody (South)
- Family Liaison at HMPYOI Huntercombe

The event was well received and a healthy debate was ignited which covered the points of... 'Where are the boundaries to the service (sign posting/referring)?, What are the barriers? How have some over come obstacles and created solutions, What is the way forward for the forum...

POPS believes that the next step is a national conference which will work towards raising awareness of the importance of family ties and promoting the concept of Family Link Workers attached to prisons.

Lesley Ward—Family Services Development Manager

FUTURE EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR...

- POPS VISITOR CENTRE GRAND OPENING DAYS APRIL AND MAY 2006
- POPS FUNDRAISING DINNER DANCE '2006 CRIMINAL JUSTICE AWARDS' SUMMER 2006
- POPS AGM OCTOBER 2006