



# Newsletter

Caring for prisoners' families

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## RE-VAMP FOR WEB SITE

NEW WEB ADDRESS: [WWW.PFFS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.PFFS.ORG.UK)

The Nationwide Foundation has funded a new, up to date web site for PFFS. As we go to press work is in progress – the designers have produced a template and we are working on the text. We hope the new site will enable us to keep people more up to date with our news and allow people interested in volunteering for us to apply online. At the same time, we hope to launch new look leaflets and publications.



## VOLUNTEER HONoured

In January of this year, Anne Dunlop (pictured, with her award), a long term volunteer with Prisoners' Families and

Friends Service (PFFS), was awarded the Una Padel Award in the Individual Category.

This award was launched by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies in 2007 to recognise outstanding contributions to the criminal justice field by organisations and individuals. The Centre had recognised that there were people who work tirelessly in the criminal justice sector and make an enormous difference, but their work often goes unrecognised.

The award was named for their former Director, Una Padel, who died of cancer

in 2006, aged just 50. Anne Dunlop, who has been a volunteer for PFFS for over 25 years is enormously honoured to receive this award. During her time at PFFS she has befriended many families, served as both Chair and Hon. Secretary of the Executive Committee and has had particular responsibility for much of the fundraising for the organisation.

As anyone familiar with the charity sector will know, fundraising can be a difficult and unrelenting task. Anne has always applied much skill and energy to it, and her optimism that PFFS will raise enough in grants and donations to meet its commitments has never been misguided.

She is popular with the families who use the service, many of whom testify that her commitment and friendship over the years has made a real difference to their lives.



### Dates to remember...

*What?*  
Annual General Meeting

*When?*  
16 November 2009 at 6.30

*Where?*  
Henry wood hall,  
Trinity church square  
London SE1

*Who?*  
Guest speaker:  
Juliet Lyon  
Prison Reform Trust.



## SWAN CENTRE NEWS

### OUTLOOK

Prisoners' Families and Friends Service is offering more tailored support to the families of ex-prisoners. We realise that their needs and the problems they are facing are very different from those of the families of newly

convicted or remanded prisoners. Therefore we are now opening the Swan Centre on a different day of the week especially for those families.

The programme is designed to address the types of issues that are important to families at this stage:

- resettlement
- employment
- housing
- benefits available to newly released prisoners
- re-establishing family relationships.

We are working in partnership with the St Giles Trust, who work with ex-prisoners in London. St Giles are running several of

the Outlook sessions.

They have discussed with the families housing, benefits and employment, informing the families what is available for their family member. There are also group counselling sessions and the probation service have been invited to speak to the families.

### ONE TO ONE SUPPORT

Having a family member in prison is often just one of a range of difficulties our service users can experience. There are often other aspects of life people need help with as well. They may be having problems accessing the benefits they are entitled to; they may need to get a job or do some further education; they may need

help with their children or just need someone to listen to them.

Families with home visitors receive this support from their befriender. However, most of those who come to the centre do not have a befriender and rely on staff in the office to give them the support they need. Swan Centre days tend to be hectic and it is not always possible for the staff to give quality time to individuals.

This is why we decided to offer more intensive support to those who want it. This support can encompass elements of befriending, mentoring, advocacy and life coaching, depending on the needs of the person.



## THE COURT PROJECT EXPANDS!

PFFS was delighted to expand the Court Project to West London Magistrates Court in April. This takes the number of London courts we now cover up to 14, made up of nine Crown Courts and five Magistrates Courts.

The Court Project aims to make families aware of the information and support that is available to them from PFFS as early on in the Criminal Justice process as possible. We do this by having trained volunteers in each of the 14 Courts to give out information to solicitors, barristers and families when custody is involved. The Court Project has helped to raise our profile as well as reach more families who might not have otherwise known about PFFS and the help they can access.

The Court Project was already present in Camberwell Green, City of Westminster, Highbury

Corner and Thames Magistrates Courts. Since the Court Project first started at Inner London Crown Court in 1994, we have realised the need for a presence in the Magistrates as well as Crown Courts. By targeting families here, it means that they can access support during the remand period, which can be a particularly unsettling and uncertain time.

West London Magistrates is a busy court, which holds specialist domestic violence and drugs courts on certain days. We have been made to feel very welcome by staff there, in particular by Stephanie Potter the Court Manager who was pleased to allow us to work within the Court. We have one volunteer who is working extremely hard there at the moment and will be joined by two newly trained volunteers in the next couple of weeks.



### OVER EASTER

This Easter we provided activities for children during the school holidays. Parents who attend the centre could bring their children on the Tuesdays for family events and outings.

Our traditional Easter egg hunt in the park took place on the first Tuesday – children looked for hidden tokens which could be exchanged for chocolate eggs.

On the second Tuesday, families went on an outing to the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green.

More recently, for half term, we arranged a trip to the Tower of London funded by Help a London Child.

We are recruiting and training volunteers who will be available on Swan Centre days to provide this support, along with members of staff.

### OPEN DOOR

Until now, the door that leads directly from the street into the Swan Centre has not been used and had been kept permanently locked.

Recently, we got a locksmith to mend the lock so that the door could be used.

This means the Swan Centre members now have their own entrance to the Centre, without needing to enter via the office.

## FAMILIES ON TRIAL

How arrest, sentencing and imprisonment affects families

A new series of films to raise awareness of the issues affecting prisoners' families during arrest, sentencing and imprisonment

The arrest and sentence of a family member can be one of the most traumatic events that a family can experience. Often still in a state of shock, families have to deal with the practical, emotional and economic impact of the arrest. Prisoners' Families and Friends Service has produced a series of films to highlight the issues that affect families. We worked in partnership with other organisations that work with prisoners' families; the project was funded by the Nationwide Foundation. The other partners are NIACRO, SHARP, Castle Gate Family Trust, Story Book Dads and Action

for Prisoners' Families.

A steering group, which included service users coordinated the project.

We worked closely with Wired, a film company to develop the films. Prisoners' families' were involved in the making of the films from the very beginning; their individual stories were recorded to provide sound footage; these stories were then edited and the scenes were filmed using actors to show the families' stories.

We want the films to be seen as widely as possible. We hope that the films will be used by professionals working with agencies who come across prisoners' families in the course of their work, to educate and raise awareness of the problems faced by families caught up in the criminal justice system.



As well as being available on DVD, a new website has been developed to host the films – we hope that as many people will watch films as possible.

[www.familiesontrial.org](http://www.familiesontrial.org)

There is no national, statutory, coordinated support for prisoners' families. Thousands of families struggle with the fallout of arrest and sentencing on their own.



## OUR NEWS

### PARTNERSHIP WITH ST GILES

Prisoners' Families and Friends Service is now working closely with St Giles, a London based charity which works with former offenders. St Giles helps people with their benefits, housing and finding a job. They work in 14 London Boroughs providing services such as a freephone benefits claims helpline, a benefits clinic and drop in centres for people with drug and alcohol

problems.

Their input will be invaluable for our work with families after the release of their family member. Representatives of the organisation have already attended our "Outlook" after release sessions to provide information for family members about benefits and housing. PFFS, in turn, can refer the person who has been in prison to St Giles so that they can take advantage of the services offered.

## Our services

### Advice and Information

- A national freephone helpline
- A range of printed information fact sheets
- First instance advice to families in courts throughout London
- A court to custody booklet

### Support and Friendship

- Home visits to prisoners' families in London
- Telephone befriending for families outside London
- The Swan Centre - providing advice, support and a place for families to meet
- Outlook - help and support in the resettlement period
- Holiday activities for children and families
- A week's holiday in Pontins for our families

### Contact Us

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