

*Yours
Faithfully*



In this issue



Being there for families after lockdown



Online tools provide a lifeline



Creativity and community care



Memories from an Old Scholar



Love: A gift to give and receive

Welcome from the Chief Executive



During the coronavirus pandemic, I've been humbled by stories of those who've put themselves at risk to serve others.

Here at Spurgeons, I've seen our colleagues and volunteers find creative ways to keep supporting, protecting and going that 'extra mile' for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. The same, I know, is true of many other charities and individuals across the land.

I'd suggest there are two groups we need to be especially mindful of in these difficult times. The first are those who I would call the 'visible but ignored'. These are the homeless on our streets, the offenders in our prisons, the young people in gangs and those families living below the breadline. Groups we often complain about, criticise, quietly condemn, or even pity from a safe distance.

The second group are the 'invisible and suffering'. These are the victims of domestic violence, young carers, or those whose mental health is quietly deteriorating. The needs of these groups have also risen. Calls to domestic violence helplines spiked dramatically during 'lockdown', while calls to *Childline* and mental health charities rose equally sharply.

Both these groups continue to need our help, especially in today's Covid-19 conscious world. But it takes bravery to step into the zone of discomfort and sacrifice. To do so is scary. It also requires expertise, to know the help being offered is safe and genuinely helpful.

There are charities across the country responding in remarkable and creative ways to the current crisis. In this edition of *Yours Faithfully*, we report how Spurgeons' teams have adapted and changed to the 'new normal.'

We have stories from our prison family support teams, where staff and volunteers have made packs to help families stay in touch with prison visits cancelled; our team in Peterborough, who are using *Facebook* to present reading and story time sessions for toddlers; *Young Carer WhatsApp* groups; and examples of supporting those at risk of domestic abuse through video conferencing.

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of all our volunteers, donors and colleagues through this exceptionally challenging period, I'm proud to say that Spurgeons has continued to offer vulnerable families a better present and a hope-filled future.

Ross Hendry
Chief Executive

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Life after lockdown: Let's all 'be there' for families

By being kept behind closed doors, locked down and not sent to school, children had become exposed to increasing levels of domestic violence

With our evidence having been accepted by a recent *Commons Select Committee*, Spurgeons' Head of Practice Lorraine White highlights the importance of being there for children and families who may be left more vulnerable by Covid-19.

The last few months have seen a collective national effort to mitigate the spread of coronavirus. Terms such as lockdown, social distancing and self-isolating have been in common usage and we are all living in new times. Yet we have also seen people coming together to support one another. At Spurgeons, this is about continuing to 'be there' for the children and families we serve, sometimes in new or additional ways.

The Children's Commissioner for England highlighted the importance of keeping our young people visible and protecting them. She identified key groups, many of whom we are working with, who may need extra support: families under pressure, those in poverty, school children with lack of access to technology or the internet, teenagers struggling with mental health, children at risk of harm or exploitation, those exposed to domestic abuse and young people with caring responsibilities.

In our evidence to the *House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee* inquiry into the impact of Covid-19, Spurgeons observed how lockdown had increased risk to particular groups, with more children out of reach and many of the vulnerable isolated, hidden or 'invisible'.

The biggest impacts we noted were increasing levels of domestic violence and abuse and the threat to mental health caused by isolation in all its forms – physical, mental and emotional. We reflected that Covid-19 has widened the gap between families from lower and higher socioeconomic groups in terms of life chances and therefore the importance of children, especially the most vulnerable, being able to safely attend school.

We have needed to be responsive; to think proactively and creatively in the face of challenge to ensure that we have remained 'open'. This has included working virtually with young people, 'doorstep' and home visits, connecting children separated from loved ones in prison, seeing children and families in our Centres and working with health, social care, faith and education partners within local communities and hubs.

We need to remain focused and determined to give our best, making the most of every opportunity. Let's also not underestimate the power of simple acts having impact: being patient, listening, encouraging, supporting. Where there may be shadows, let's shine a light.

Let's be there.



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Keep virtual and carry on

The acclaimed science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke once wrote: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is equivalent to magic.”

There have been times when this ‘magic’ has brought us all together and there are also times when it has helped solve some of our greatest challenges. One of the more positive stories to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic has been the contribution made by digital technology.

Here’s just a flavour of how ‘going virtual’ has helped Spurgeons keep its vital services running for vulnerable children and families through a difficult time...



Childrens’ Centres

Peterborough

Our Honeyhill and Orton teams have held virtual multi-agency meetings and engaged with families through virtual workshops and play sessions.

The *Early Years* team has used online tools to connect with parents stuck at home and track the progress of their children. These included *Tapestry*, a learning journal whereby parents can add observations, photos and videos of what they are doing with their children, and mobile app *EasyPeasy* which offers them weekly tips and games ideas. The team has also posted story time sessions and shared play ideas and activities. Angie Lovell’s reading of Rod Campbell’s *Dear Zoo*, complete with animal sounds and actions, proved a *Facebook* classic!

Sutton Coldfield

Children and Families Worker Sarah Hynett gave an example of how she’d used online video of family contact sessions to capture the child’s voice during lockdown.

“The child was clean, suitably dressed and showed me around the flat, also clean and well presented. We discussed what activity she’d like to do with me – she wanted to draw a picture of me and a rainbow.

She sat at her table, got out a yellow pen and said, ‘this is your hair and I’m doing it zig-zag as you have curly hair’; then she added my features, body and legs to the drawing.

“Children are at the forefront of our work in supporting families, and it’s vital we capture the impact of any issues affecting their lives by completing observations and building on conversations with them.

“Children feel listened to and giving them a voice promotes self-esteem and self-worth. Children can develop and learn that they have opinions, feelings, and emotions and feel valued.”

Thanks to technology, lockdown wasn’t allowed to get in the way of this happening.

Wiltshire

Five to Thrive groups support positive parenting techniques and help parents understand the five key areas in which they can help their young children to thrive. In Wiltshire, our Centres provided virtual story times, posted online videos of their *Five to Thrive* groups and offered downloadable activity sheets for families to continue the learning at home.



Young Carers Services

Normally in June, we take young carers to the *Young Carers Festival*, an annual event where they can have fun, unwind, make new friends and try new things.

But with this year’s festival cancelled, we held a virtual party. In the run-up to it, we encouraged young carers to share their memories of previous *Young Carers Festivals* on their *Facebook* pages.

For *Carers Week*, also in June, we engaged our young carers using daily virtual activities, from scavenger hunts to quizzes and even online science sessions.

We work with over 200 young carers who care for someone with a mental health need. So, for *Mental Health Awareness Week* in May, we shared videos online and provided tips on social media to help open up the conversation around mental health and let young carers know we are there for them.

Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP)

SPIP helps separating parents to put their children first and manage and reduce the impact of conflict on them – something that’s been particularly important at this time of stress and anxiety. We trialled virtual sessions in April, and since then the number of sessions has increased each week, with more facilitators finding the confidence to deliver sessions in this new way. These virtual groups are smaller than pre-lockdown face-to-face sessions, with a maximum of four people per course, allowing easier coordination and administration.

Participating parents confirm that they’ve really been able to engage with the programme through this new approach. One parent said, “To be honest, I didn’t know what to expect at the course. However, as soon as I got into the *Zoom* meeting room, Robert welcomed me in such a warm and kind manner, it made me feel at ease and free to be myself, express myself and really engage with the course...everyone was able to talk about things we would normally never do... I have left this course encouraged, heard and with new skills (and old skills sharpened) to raise my children and look after myself.”

Prison family support

To help offenders maintain contact with their families (who may themselves have been struggling to cope during lockdown), we offered access to comprehensive information and sources of help, including that from other agencies and support groups.

BeLeave

We produced a short video with tips for improved wellbeing during lockdown, for girls and young women at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and shared it on social media. The service also hosted an online discussion on mental health for young women, which included designing a wellbeing poster.

Our volunteers

Our colleagues found online ways to stay connected with and show our appreciation for those of you who do so much in your spare time to help vulnerable families.

Wiltshire Children’s Centres posted profiles of their volunteers, including why they volunteer, on social media. At *HMP Winchester*, the *Invisible Walls* team kept in touch with their volunteers through *Zoom* calls, newsletters, phone calls and emails. They shared lockdown stories and hosted a fun challenge to dress up and pose as a recreation of a film poster!

Our *HMP Norwich* team contacted their volunteers to thank them for their support. One volunteer colleague, Jenny, said, “Thank you! The best, most creative volunteers’ week event yet. What can you do next? See you all soon!”

Returning safely

In preparation for returning to face-to-face work at our *Wiltshire Children’s Centre*, colleagues produced short videos for parents and carers so they knew what the ‘new normal’ looks like. These included a virtual tour of the Centres, and the new measures that had been put in place to keep families and colleagues safe.

Norwich Connect

Video conferencing has helped many Spurgeons’ teams to catch up with colleagues and find new ways of working. There have been other, more social aspects too; our *Norwich Connect* team replaced a planned 50th birthday celebration at the office with an after-work virtual bingo session! Hopefully staying at home managed to bring a full house!



Children's Centres

A feast of creativity

Technology has played a key role in fostering strong connections with vulnerable families during the pandemic. But more traditional means of learning, expression and communication have also come to the fore.

From play packs for *Little Learners* in Wiltshire, to activity sheets for children unable to visit their father in prison; from mental health resources for young carers and vulnerable girls to colouring and craft packs for young ones at Children's Centres, for example, plenty of materials have been made available.

A lot of this was made possible by friendly supporters and funders, to whom we are very, very grateful. Thanks to you all for your wonderful support through what proved a difficult, though extremely creative time!



Finding light in the shadow of Covid-19

While coronavirus lockdown has meant hardship, isolation and difficult times for many families, it has also brought new friends, old friends and countless supporters to our Children's Centres across the country.

Our services in Wiltshire, for example, linked up with local butcher *Walter Rose and Son*, who provided more than 20 meat hampers for vulnerable families and those families in self-isolation whose income had been interrupted due to Covid-19.

The hampers were delivered to families across our East, South, and West Children's Centre services. Each hamper contained milk and eggs, as well as a variety of meat products, from meat joints to mince, steaks to sausages.

The feedback from families proved just how popular the hampers had been:

"I loved the meat hamper and was so grateful; it helped me out massively for food as we are struggling financially at the moment."

"... me and my partner were overwhelmed as money has been tight and we were struggling till pay day but this has saved us."

"My eldest daughter helped me make meatballs and pasta which is a family favourite in my house...the girls loved helping me find new things we could do with different meat and how to cook different dishes."

"We also used the eggs for cakes which was a nice treat as we haven't been able to get eggs recently."

Thanks to generous food donations from local suppliers and big supermarkets (including *Aldi, M&S, Morrisons, Tesco* and *Waitrose*), our Children's Centres teams have been able to deliver food parcels to many families in need.

In Elmbridge, Surrey, where families struggled with loss of income and children having to stay at home during lockdown, local households also donated food supplies, with one individual contacting our Family Centre team to say they wanted to provide £30 of shopping for a family each week, an offer they extended for three months.

When the local Spurgeons' team thanked the individual for their generosity, they received this reply: "I really loved supporting what you were doing and I'm amazed that you have supported as many families as you have over these past 11 weeks - your kindness and dedication has touched such a huge number of people.

"Buying food for a family rather than donating tinned food or cash, was an eye-opening experience for me. It really made me think about the families the food might be going to, and how they might be struggling.



"I often shed tears thinking of how much food we, as a family, consume when there are children around us who don't get the opportunity to eat decent meals."

And in Peterborough, our Orton Children's Centre was delighted to receive plants from local horticultural enterprises *Up the Garden Bath* and *Hetty's Herbs & Plants* for families to enjoy growing them with their children.

So while this dreadful pandemic has brought so much suffering in so many ways, Spurgeons teams have seen a great deal to admire and be thankful for in the way people and communities have responded.



When the going gets tough...

One story of how a Spurgeons' key worker responded to the coronavirus pandemic recalls the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, when he said: "A time of crisis is not just a time of anxiety and worry. It gives a chance, an opportunity, to choose well or to choose badly."

Well, *Early Years* Worker Fran Knotts clearly chose well when she saw lockdown as an opportunity to get to know and help families in The Friary, a deprived area of Salisbury where our Wiltshire teams have wanted to engage more parents for some time.

Delivering local *Learning through Play* sessions, Fran had become very attached to The Friary community and became our 'community champion' for the area. When Fran saw the work *Salisbury City Council's* community teams were doing under its *Stronger Families* project, working in partnership with the *Any Body Can Cook* local initiative to get healthy food parcels delivered to local families under lockdown, she saw an opportunity to befriend more Friary families and make them aware of the different ways in which Spurgeons could help them.

So, after talking to her line manager, Caroline Wells, Fran was freed up by Spurgeons to volunteer on the Council's food parcel delivery service, giving her a chance to build new and develop old relationships in The Friary.

"My work on the food parcels introduced me to around 20 local families, giving me a way to become a friendly face for them when they really needed support," said Fran.

"I've been able to tell the families all about the ways our Children's Centres can help them - the virtual *Little Learner* sessions, *Mum 2 Mum* groups and our *Bookstart* and *Transitions* initiatives, for example, plus all the support that's available on our website and *Facebook* pages.

"With the help of local supermarkets and community partners, the food parcel service has been a lifeline for many vulnerable families. It's also given me an opportunity to build trust in the community and show such families just how much Spurgeons can help them," she added.

An appreciative Caroline Wells summed up the all-round value of Fran's work and initiative in a time of crisis: "Fran's local knowledge and the partnership she's developed with the Council has helped Spurgeons to not only reach but build relationships with more families, it's enabled stronger community partnerships and provided help for local people when they really needed it."

The Archbishop would surely be proud of you, Fran.



Delivering local *Learning through Play* sessions, Fran had become very attached to The Friary community and became our 'community champion' for the area.



Fond summer memories of bat on ball and afternoon teas

Spurgeons was contacted recently by Martin Kelly, one of our Old Scholars. With his 80th birthday just around the corner, it would be an understatement to say Martin has lived a full and interesting life.

Born on the Lancashire coast during the Second World War, Martin spent his boyhood in a number of orphanages before becoming a Royal Marine, a senior banker and spending six years of retirement volunteering to work with street children in Cape Town townships.

In his unfinished autobiography Martin, always a keen sportsman, looks back very fondly on the time he lived at the Spurgeons' orphanages in Reigate - which he describes as "a true place of refuge, peace and lack of fear" - and Birchington, in Kent...

"Sport was very much a part of my life in my childhood as it was inspired by the sport facilities and encouragement whilst at Spurgeons' orphanage in Reigate, before moving to Birchington. The cricket pitch was superb and we had a classical wooden cricket pavilion overlooked by the main building and a number of cedar trees.

"These were my introduction to the wonderful sounds of leather on willow. Our umpire was also the groundsman and cricket and football coach and to him I give grateful thanks for the way he coached many of us. So much so that we had good results against the teams we played.

"At the age of eleven, at my second orphanage, we dressed in full cricket whites which had been donated. The excitement of walking across to the wicket with leg pads on gave me memories I'll never forget. I found out that I had an 'eye for the ball.' When we were fielding I was encouraged to be a bowler and I remember how I could bowl as a medium pace bowler, and also could spin the cricket ball in two directions, on and off.

"My teacher at Spurgeons in Reigate was super. Her name was Mrs Warren, who lived in a largish house named Derrygyle in Wray Park Road, Reigate, whose garden backed on to the orphanage border."

"When we moved to Birchington and had to attend the local state school, King Ethelbert's, how good it was that we also had good sports facilities.

One memorable aspect, because we played well, was that our experienced skills took over the established school cricket and football teams. This caused a certain amount of jealousy. We were nicknamed by the other pupils as 'outsiders' as we came from the orphanage approximately one mile away. We boys in the Spurgeons' orphanage also had our own football fixtures on Saturdays and I played in goal.

"Until the move to Birchington, we were educated by the then orphanage school which must have been good because when we moved and were assessed at King Ethelbert's, we were all well ahead of the other pupils in our tests. We had to attend state school due to changes brought in by the Education Act 1953.

"My teacher at Spurgeons in Reigate was super. Her name was Mrs Warren, who lived in a largish house named Derrygyle in Wray Park Road, Reigate, whose garden backed on to the orphanage border. We could visit her after school hours via a small gate and walked in through the long grass in the orchard. Her home backed the orphanage grounds and the orphanage cobbler, Mr Alma, who had a little workshop for mending and looking after all the boys' and girls' shoes. I used to be fascinated when I crept up to his window to see him at work. I even thought that I might want to be a cobbler when I grew up.

"Each week Mrs Warren would invite two boys to use the grass roller on her large lawn. It was fun. Afterwards, we would be served with an English tea with bone china in her lounge and she would give us sixpence each.



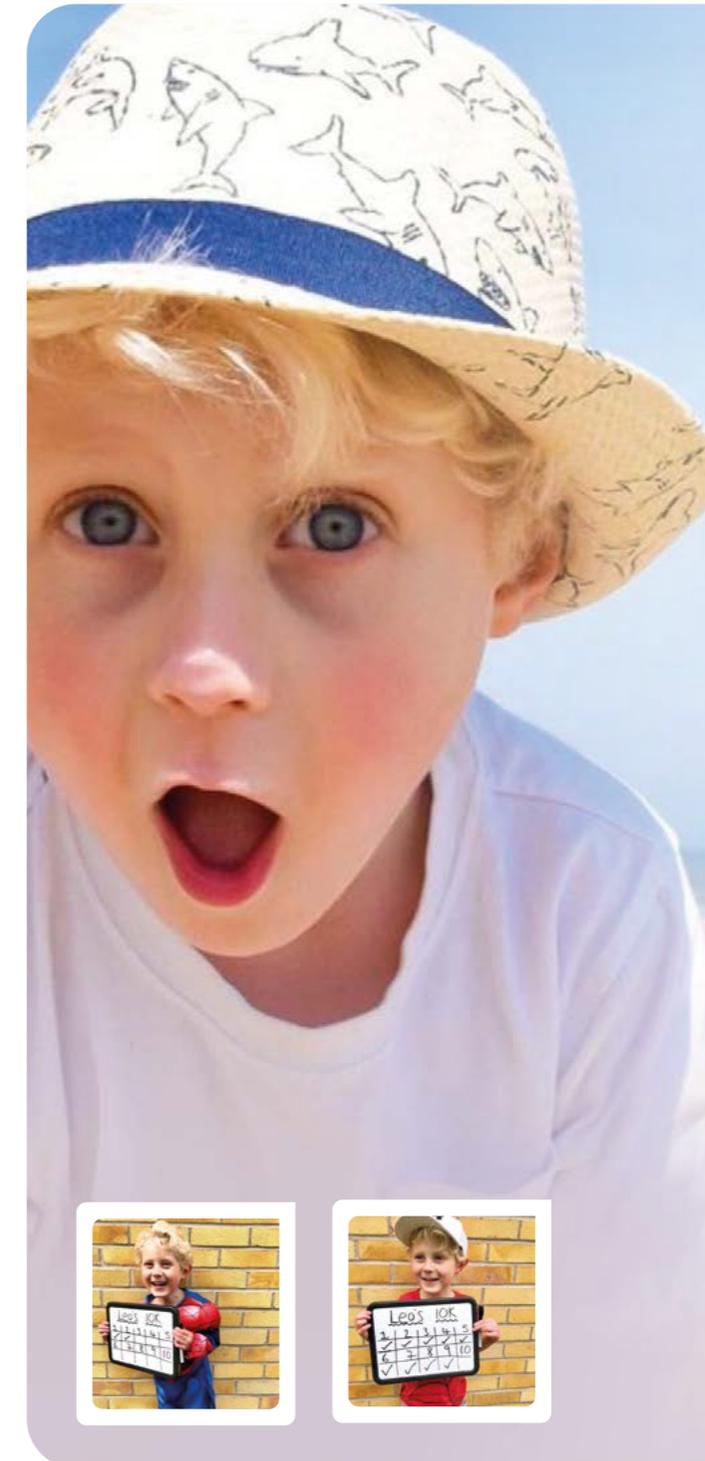
"This was my introduction to English social behaviour and manners, learning how to eat and drink correctly at afternoon tea!"

"Her husband had an up-market grocery shop in Buckingham Palace Road with the Royal Warrant to supply groceries to Buckingham Royal Palace.

"He too was a kind person and showed us around the shop when I visited him with Mrs Warren after we had taken traditional afternoon tea at the Strand Palace Hotel.

"During the summer athletics at King Ethelbert's I found out I was no good in the 100 yards race, yet when it came to the one-mile race I had more success. As a result, I volunteered to do cross country, which I really enjoyed and when I was fourteen represented my school in the East Kent cross country competition. My training and keenness for this sport, building up stamina, continued for a number of years, which would be good experience and preparation for the future when I eventually joined the Royal Marines, at nineteen years old. This would help me through my future intense training to eventually pass out as a Royal Marine Commando. It certainly made me stronger and I was always encouraged by my housemaster Mr Willicome."

If you would like to read more of Martin Kelly's memoirs, you can contact him at spike43cdo@gmail.com



Lion-hearted effort from our superhero

While centenarian Captain Tom Moore lifted the nation's spirits in lockdown with his £37m garden fundraising effort for NHS charities, Spurgeons applauded its own superhero - a five-year-old boy called Leo.

Leo, whose family has been supported by Spurgeons' services, ran a kilometre in laps of his back garden every day for 10 days to raise funds for Spurgeons and help his family say 'thank you.'

The young man smashed his £100 target and, with gift aid, has gone on to raise more than £500 at the time of writing - and he never needed a walking frame.

His mum said that seeing Leo enjoy all the activities at Spurgeons, "made me aware what a great job you all do."

Spurgeons' Chief Executive Ross Hendry was delighted and sent a personal 'thank you' message: "Leo, what a star you are! Thank you for thinking about other children who need help at this time and for helping Spurgeons to be able to help them. You've made all of us at Spurgeons very happy."

If you feel inspired by Leo's achievement and would like to add to his fundraising total, go to his fundraising page:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/leoschallenge



LEO'S 100% CHALLENGE	DATE	AMOUNT
100%	10/10/20	£100
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Prisons Family Support



How a prison play area got a lockdown makeover

While coronavirus put Norwich through lockdown, prison residents in the city were rolling up their sleeves and doing their bit to transform a Spurgeons' children's play area.

The Visitor Centre at Norwich Prison, run by Spurgeons, had been closed since 23rd March, when prison visits were suspended due to the pandemic. Now with visits having restarted, offenders' children and families can look forward to enjoying a much brighter and better appointed play and garden space, thanks to the Spurgeons' team of colleagues and volunteers... with some much welcome support from low-risk offenders housed in the prison's Britannia House resettlement unit.

Men from 'The House', many of whom are nearing the end of their sentences and carry out work in the community, repainted and mended picnic benches, a Wendy house and sand tray, as well as doing all the necessary heavy lifting and clearing up messy areas. They also helped plant up some containers and generally assisted in getting the Visitor Centre ready again for visits.

Additional help was provided by young people from *St Edmunds Society*, the Norwich-based collaborative vocational learning hub for teenagers who would otherwise not be in education or training, who supplied and painted the colourful fence panels and built some steps down to the shed area.

Dedicated volunteer Angela Consterdine was also on hand to make a bug hotel from old pallets, create a children's planting area and put together a play table from an old electric cable drum.

Funding for the project was largely met by a £15,000 donation from the *KPE4 Trust*, which was needed to cover the cost of laying the new flooring but also stretched to purchase a screen and *Nintendo Wii* for use on prison Family Day visits.

Just before the centre's reopening, one member of the Britannia House team said: "The work has been a positive motivation as since the Covid-19 outbreak I have missed the daily focus.

"I am pleased to be back in the Visitor Centre now, helping to get it ready for visits to start again and working on the garden area.

"It's been great to be involved in the transformation from a tired, worn out area to a beautiful colourful garden which I believe the children will love playing in."

Another commented: "I'm extremely proud of helping Spurgeons' staff to prepare for visitors.

"Visits are an important part of life in prison for residents' mind-sets and I am eager to help them restart. We've refurbished the outdoor garden play area to a high standard for the visitors and I know my daughter would enjoy playing in here now. I hope families and children will enjoy this transformation for years to come."

Family Services Manager Naomi Webb added: "We wanted to create a space that welcomes the children to play outside while they wait for their prison visit. Visiting days can be long and tiring for families, some having to travel considerable distances to visit their loved ones, and so having a safe outside area at the Visitors Centre that is enriching and inviting makes a real difference to the whole experience for children and families."



New prisons booklet reaches out

During Coronavirus, homes have been likened to 'prisons'. But the experience still falls well short of life in real prisons where residents have become literally 'locked down', with little (if any) contact with their families.

The situation has become even bleaker for those in prison serving indeterminate sentences, including Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP). Here progression and release is reliant on offenders' engagement with training programmes and being able to demonstrate reduced risk, all of which is very difficult for them under circumstances dictated by Covid-19.

Spurgeons has teamed up with Dr Harry Annison, Associate Professor at *Southampton Law School, Southampton University* to produce a booklet designed to support families of those sentenced to IPP and those working with them.

Offering a Helping Hand was built on collaborative work with families linked to Spurgeons' *Invisible Walls* project at HMP Winchester. The booklet is intended to complement literature published, or about to be published, by organisations including the *Parole Board* and *HM Prisons and Probation Service*.

In particular, the booklet:

- **Reflects on the feelings of injustice, stress and uncertainty felt by many families**
- **Provides links and information on a number of relevant issues and processes**
- **Identifies more general sources of help and information**
- **Pinpoints other ways in which families can get involved and find support.**

"For several years now, I've been generating empirical research on the needs of families of those sentenced to IPP and working with stakeholders to identify exactly what relevant organisations could do to help families cope with the particular challenges of the IPP sentence and those sentenced to IPP to return safely to their families," said Dr Annison.

"This is part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness of the substantial damage that the discredited IPP sentence often causes to families and others supporting IPP offenders," he added.

"With this booklet, we want to acknowledge the burdens and struggles faced by those living with IPP and to help them deal with and make positive progress in their specific situation," said Vicky Baird, Family Intervention Officer for *Invisible Walls*.

"We hope it will help and reassure them that they are not alone."



Reaching out to those on long road ahead

Dr Harry Annison says the *Offering a Helping Hand* booklet is a hopeful point on what he describes as a long road for IPP offenders and their families...

From the start of what has become my academic career, I found myself closely connected with the controversial indeterminate sentence introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, *Imprisonment for Public Protection* (IPP).

That was more than 10 years ago, when I played a very small part in the production of the *Centre for Mental Health's In the Dark* report, which raised significant concerns about the IPP sentence and the damage it would cause. I then conducted a detailed study of the politics and policymaking dynamics that influenced the creation, contestation, amendment and abolition of the IPP sentence, published as *Dangerous Politics*.

By 2017, informed observers knew that significant problems still remained with the IPP sentence. But it was also clear that, despite excellent work by a range of academics and organisations, there were gaps in our knowledge. In particular, relatively little was known about the needs of families of people serving IPP. What were their experiences, and what did they need?

The needs of these families are an important consideration in their own right. But increased recognition of the role of families in resettlement (illustrated, for example, by *Lord Farmer's Review*, and the work on *Strengthening Prisoners Family Ties* makes clear that their needs should also be an important consideration for anyone seeking to ameliorate the difficulties faced by people serving IPP in achieving release and sustainable resettlement.

Initially, research I conducted with Professor Rachel Condry (*Oxford University*) and funded by *Southampton Law School* gave us a clearer understanding of the problems..

We wrote that: "a pervasive sense of injustice and uncertainty underpins and permeates more specific concerns relating to efforts to progress towards release, and indeed to manage the stresses of life beyond release. Families report significant material effects, which also appear to be heavily gendered in their distribution. Family relationships – both with the offender and more widely – are often heavily disrupted. Negative health effects caused by the stress and anxiety of the experience were often reported."

A collaborative project, co-funded by the *Prison Reform Trust* and the *ESRC*, then enabled us to work with families to act on this. We wanted to know, given these difficulties, what would help. What could organisations – like the *Prison Service*, the *Parole Board*, probation, and others – do? A report, *A Helping Hand*, emerged from that collaborative project. I have been pleased with the positive response from a range of relevant organisations to our findings and recommendations, and I am aware of a number of positive initiatives that are ongoing.

It has been a particular pleasure to work with the *Invisible Walls* team based at HMP Winchester to develop the booklet *Offering a Helping Hand*. Being able to draw on, and learn from, their experience and expertise has been invaluable.

A recurrent theme in my research on the IPP sentence is the sense from many offenders and their families that they have been forgotten. I hope that this booklet is of practical use. But I also hope that – along with the work being done by the *Parole Board*, *HMPPS* and others – it reassures people sentenced to IPP, and their loved ones, that they are not forgotten by everyone.

The work to try to make things better for them – often quiet, often frustratingly slow – does continue.

Love in a time of coronavirus

Imagine a family going into 2020 with a housing problem, with money tight but their local Children's Centre providing a lifeline through various support groups. Then a pandemic strikes and lockdown closes the Children's Centre, confining the family to accommodation that was already unsuited to their needs. Then Mum has a baby.

Mum and Dad struggle to get the food they need for the family and nappies are nowhere to be found, let alone toilet roll. The children are getting bored and on top of each other in cramped living conditions; they start to misbehave and Mum, instead of being left to care for her new-born, is beside herself with worry.

The family's access to technology is very limited and so, with school also off limits, the children's learning and development is under threat.

Fortunately, that family was embraced by our Children's Services team in Peterborough, who put in place an emergency support package that included:

- Foodbank parcels
- Support to find food outlets that would take the family's free school meal vouchers
- Support to get nappies and baby supplies
- Guidance for Mum on getting appropriate medical treatment for her mental health
- Parental support in introducing a new sibling and encouraging the children to feel included
- Activity packs for the children
- Support to access appropriate baby furniture.

"I'm pleased to say the family are now continuing to manage food and resources, supported by our local Children's Centre and other local agencies," said Ann Smiljanic, Senior Family Support Worker.

Just imagine what might have been the outcome if Spurgeons hadn't been there.

Missing you - children send gifts to Spurgeons' colleagues

Michelle Wagstaff, Family Support Worker at Peterborough Children's Centres, got a lovely surprise after delivering a food parcel to a local family.

The children were missing her, and sent her some drawings they had done. The first two show Michelle, drawn by the two-year-old, and the third picture shows the family together during lockdown in their house.

