Pillars Family Start Plus Dunedin (Pilot) model and evaluation

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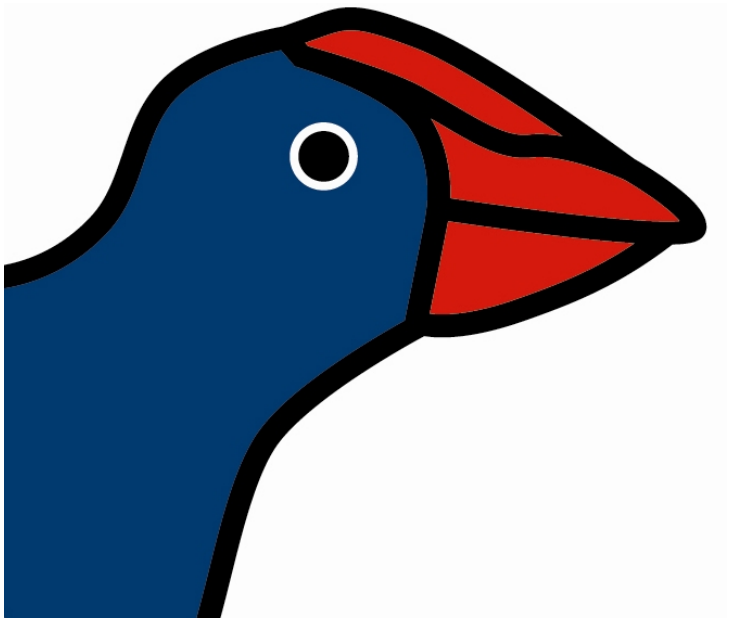

An evaluation completed for Pillars (Inc) by Pukeko Research Ltd, P.O. Box 2031, Christchurch

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Executive Summary

Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou has commissioned this contextual analysis and process evaluation of the Pillars Family Start Plus pilot service now operating in Dunedin. It was carried out between January and March 2019.

Methodology included a literature/ programme search, interviews with a range of stakeholders and staff and whānau case studies. Privacy and confidentiality of all participants was assured. The first name of the programme developer and key worker, Simone, was used with permission.

The programme was placed within a context of working in the shadow of the justice sector with vulnerable whānau. Contextual material includes research on the numbers of and outcomes for children of prisoners, the work of Pillars, working with vulnerable whānau (including kaupapa Māori, partnership approaches and Ellis's 'model of practice'), family-friendly prison policies and practices and the 'Bill of Rights' for the children of prisoners.

The model by which the Family Start programme operates (which has been adapted in the Pillars pilot) is briefly outlined. It is a large national programme with over 40 providers, reaching 7,200 whānau each year.

The development of the new programme is outlined. Anglican Family Care provided office space and other support for the project. A core component was winning the trust of justice services, and especially the prison, to advance the model. Details of the plan were developed as a partnership so that there was strong buy-in from justice services and clients.

An initial programme logic based on working with the whānau in prison and in the community was developed. This model is unique in New Zealand. Features that distinguish it from the Family Start model are its intensity, type of engagement and including a person in the justice system as whānau, including working in more than one location (e.g. prison). Family Start workers interviewed noted that such a model would not be possible within the normal FS model.

The staff at the Otago Corrections Facility have been closely involved in the development of the programme and are strongly supportive of it. Key issues for them involve adapting services to support whānau visits.

The programme alters the normal referral criteria for Family Start by putting 'involvement in the criminal justice system' as a compulsory criterion, along with the criteria that normally operate within the FS programme.

The programme requires multiple engagements. A kaupapa Māori model of engagement has been adopted to ensure a highly engaged and respectful approach with all parties, including the principles of manaakitanga and whanāungatanga.

The process of providing FS services in the prison and in the community are described, including the various issues in relation to working in the prison. Two community case

studies are also provided, examining the complex approaches and relationship issues between whānau partners, and the need to maintain a highly engaged approach. The case studies probe some aspects of the programme.

The programme started in February 2018, and clients were admitted from 1 July 2018. In response to the intensity of the programme, 1.5 FTE are now covering 13 cases, and a .75 mentoring co-ordinator is developing a programme and enrolling and training mentors. No matches have been made to date. A list of current cases is provided, and evaluative comments from incarcerated fathers provided. The cases include multiple vulnerabilities and most require long-term engagement.

A set of key issues are identified: achievements to date; boundaries and resources; working in the prison environment; working with prisoners; parenting in the prison context; and FS as an effective model for engaging parents in the justice system in good parenting.

A series of issues arising are considered in the conclusion, and discussion of replicability of the programme in other places is considered. The project is transportable in principle, subject to high quality engagement and continued application of professional practice.

A model of practice is provided.

Introduction

This evaluation was carried out between January and March 2019. The brief included three elements:

1. Explain and model the approach of the Pillars Family Start Plus Dunedin, including its key features and replicability.

2. Provide a process evaluation of the programme to date, including set-up, development, staffing, clients and measures.

3. Examine the kaupapa Māori approach adopted as the model for engagement for the programme.

The programme emerged out of discussions in late 2017, when the organisation Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou was approached by Oranga Tamariki about the possibility of providing services to the whānau of prisoners within the Family Start model.

The particular problem identified was a difficulty in adequately engaging certain 'hard to reach' client groups within the Family Start system, one of these being whānau who had involvement in the criminal justice system.

Programmes offered within the Pillars model at the time did not meet the strict age criteria of the Family Start model, but were effective at reaching the targeted client group in general.

In the pilot project described in this report, Pillars was asked to design and develop a small programme that would engage and support the whānau of prisoners, within (generally speaking) the normal framework on Family Start. The position was established in Dunedin with one FTE in February 2018.

The programme has been operating in practice for less than a year, which prohibits any evaluation other than a consideration of process. In evaluating a pilot such as this, the focus is therefore on the context, the model, the set-up and process to date. It will not be possible to examines outcomes until the project has been operating for at least two years, given the long-term nature of the intervention.

One key issue that the evaluation has been asked to address is whether the Dunedin pilot would be able to be replicated at other sites. This is considered throughout with the intention of building a model for replicability.

Methodology

A simple methodology was used for this evaluation. It consists of four elements:

- A brief review and consideration of literature associated with Family Start, children of prisoners in Aotearoa and 'hard to reach' families;

- Interviews with a range of stakeholders with an interest in the pilot;
- Interviews with Pillars staff; and
- Interviews with a small number of clients.

Formal ethical approval was not sought for this project from an external body. The evaluator is a member of the Royal Society of New Zealand (Te Apārangi) and the research ethics protocols of that organisation were followed. In particular, all participants were asked to sign an agreement to participate. Their confidentiality was assured, and they were told that any quotes from their interviews would be treated anonymously. This is the practice that has been followed in Pillars evaluations for years, with only staff of the organisation, and their comments, being identified.

There is a focus on ensuring that services can be explained clearly, barriers examined, and outputs explored, within a general framework of privacy and confidentiality for the contributing individuals and organisations.

An early meeting was held with Pillars senior staff to set the framework for the evaluation, and from that meeting the evaluation programme was designed and developed. Key domains were the need for a clear outline of the programme, a clear analysis of how it worked and some modelling to consider whether (and how) the programme could (and, to a lesser extent should) be replicated in other parts of the country.

Context

This section will provide a brief overview of the research context that feeds into the particular programme and influences the programme logic.

The children of prisoners

In recent years, there has been a large increase in research on the children of prisoners. Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou ("Pillars") carried out a significant two-year New Zealand research study in 2009 and 2010, interviewing 368 prisoners in nine prisons and 72 whānau and tamariki[1]. At the time, it was one of the largest such studies undertaken internationally.

The key finding of the study was that the children of prisoners were, through a number of pathways, more likely than other children to end up being sentenced to one or more terms of imprisonment. While the study was itself unable to estimate the increased risk of these children going to prison, we were able to incorporate some results from the Christchurch Health and Development Study (CHDS), which has carried out a longitudinal study of 1265 babies born in Christchurch in mid-1977. These results are displayed in Table 1 below:

Parental history of imprisonment Outcome	Yes (N=33)	No (N=953)	p
Crime			
% Property or violent offending (21-25 years)	20.7	11.4	NS
% Arrested or convicted (21-25 years)	17.2	7.4	<.10
% Imprisonment (ever)	15.6	1.6	<.001
Substance Use			
% Nicotine dependence (25 years)	48.3	22.1	<.001
% Alcohol dependence (21-25 years)	6.9	5.3	NS
% Illicit drug dependence (21-25 years)	17.2	8	<.10
Mental Health			
% Depression/anxiety disorder (21-25 years)	41.4	30.3	NS
% Antisocial personality disorder (21-25 years)	13.8	2.7	<.001
% Suicide attempt (ever)	18.2	8.1	<.05
Partnership/Parenthood			
% Got pregnant/got partner pregnant (by age 20)	34.3	16.6	<.01
% Became natural parent (by age 20)	24.1	7.4	<.01
% Inter-partner violence past 12 months (25 years)	13.8	8.3	NS
Education/Employment			
% No educational qualifications (by age 25)	37.5	12.3	<.001
% 12+ months unemployment (21-25 years)	20.7	8.9	<.05
% Welfare dependent (25 years)	27.6	10.9	<.01

Table 1. Comparison of overall cohort to those with a parental history of imprisonment, CHDS[2]

[1] Gordon, Liz (2009) Invisible Children. Christchurch: Pillars Inc; Gordon, Liz (2011) The causes and consequences of intergenerational imprisonment. Christchurch: Pillars, Inc.

[2] Kindly provided to us by Professor David Fergusson for our 2009 study.

The figures were calculated from the results of the study where participants were aged 25. Two columns reflect a range of outcomes for those participants who had experienced parental imprisonment and those who had not. A range of other factors, such as socio-economic, ethnic and deprivation factors are hidden in this table but relevant.

While definitive in terms of the differential outcomes between the children of prisoners and all other children, it should be emphasised that the sample number of such children within the study is very small (33 participants).

Nevertheless, as the only longitudinal study to date to consider parental imprisonment as a factor, it is very valuable and has been widely used by agencies as indicative. Extrapolated, the table shows that the children of prisoners may be 9.5 times more likely than the children of non-prisoners to have a prison sentence by age 25. They are also significantly more at risk of a range of other poor outcomes.

The qualitative and quantitative findings of the Pillars study, and a very large amount of other research, emphasise the difficulties that the children of prisoners face throughout childhood. They are more at risk of physical, mental and emotional health problems. Their education is likely to be disrupted and many do not complete schooling. Most are brought up in benefit-led households, which is likely to mean that they live in a household below the poverty line, however measured. Because of these cumulative factors, by adolescence they are highly at risk of forming poor peer relationships that may lead them into alcohol and drug abuse, risky practices and crime[3].

Recent evidence demonstrates that the Pillars study, and others like it, may have significantly under-estimated the number of children with a parent in prison. Because most prisoners are men, and many may not have their names on the children's birth certificates, it is hard to estimate how many children have experienced parental incarceration. In 2011, Pillars estimated that there were probably around 20,000 children at any one time with a parent in prison, based on the number of children reported by the prisoner sample. With the growth in prisoner numbers since that time, the figure often adopted now is 22- 23,000.

But it may be that this is an underestimate. A very recent study has found that nearly half of all families in the United States had experienced the incarceration of a family member[4]. This has been a direct result of the mass incarceration model adopted by the USA over the past 30 years. A high rate of prosecution, long sentences, high criminalisation of minor offences and so on have caused this. The figure is nowhere near as high in New Zealand overall, but may be approaching that figure for Māori.

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[3] Murray, J (2007) The cycle of punishment: social exclusion of prisoners and their children. Criminology and Criminal Justice. 7 (1) 55-81.

[4] Enns, P et al (2019) What Percentage of Americans Have Ever Had a Family Member Incarcerated?: Evidence from the Family History of Incarceration Survey. Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World. Retrieved at https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119829332

Recent ground-breaking work by the New Zealand Treasury has begun to explore the extent and effects of familial incarceration using the Government's data-sharing platform, the IDI. Interestingly, it echoed and strengthened the Pillars position that the children of prisoners are ten times more likely (as they put it) than other children to spend time in prison.

The Treasury methodology[5] compared four indicators of potential poor child outcomes: findings of neglect or abuse, mostly supported by welfare benefits since birth, parent with a sentence history and mother with no formal qualifications. As well as looking at individual characteristics, the authors considered what happened when two, three or all of the characteristics were combined. Children of prisoners aged 0-4 were particularly likely to have two or three of the characteristics present, with 94% having three such indicators, the highest by far of all the risk categories.

On the basis of these risks Treasury predicted a range of poor outcomes for the children aged 0-4, of whom 61,485, or 16.9% of the total, were noted to have a parent with a sentence history. These include likelihood of time on benefit, not achieving qualifications, receiving community or custodial sentence, injury or hospitalisation and other negative outcomes. Treasury estimated that the children aged 0-5 in its sample were, compared to all children:

- Eight times more likely to have contact with Youth Justice services before age 18
- Three times more likely to leave school with no qualifications
- Six times more likely to receive benefits for more than two years before the age of 21
- Ten times more likely to spend time in jail before the age of 21
- Four times more likely to receive benefits for more than five years when they are aged 25-34 years.

The Treasury 2016 analysis was a useful look at risks of poor outcomes, and strongly supported the view of Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou that the children of prisoners are among the most vulnerable of the many vulnerable child groups.

Pillars

Pillars Ka Pou Whakahou was formed 30 years ago by Verna McFelin. With her husband in prison, she faced many barriers to keeping her family together, through both the Corrections system and a lack of support generally. Pillars was formed out of the experiences of whānau. Its key role has always been to support the children and reduce the risk of the next generation ending up in prison[6].

Pillars runs a range of programmes inside and outside prisons in a number of areas around the country. At the heart of the service is the family wrap-around, which involves supporting the non-custodial parent in the community and providing mentoring for the children. There are also various programmes in prisons, including the Family Pathways Centres in two areas.

[5] Treasury, The (2016) Characteristics of children at greater risk of poor outcomes as adults. Analytical paper 16/01. Wellington: Treasury.
[6] 'In the shadow of prison'. Publication showcasing 30 years of the organisation.

The large research project in 2009-2010 emerged out of a need for programmes to be evidence-based. Up until then, the only evidence of the needs of the children of prisoners came from other countries, whereas the agency sought research that would reflect New Zealand circumstances, and especially the high rates of imprisonment of our indigenous people. The research both mirrored international studies and also gave a unique New Zealand perspective.

Pillars' response to the research was to produce a practice manual for those working with the children of prisoners, and also to develop an organisational training programme for practitioners. Pillars can now claim, more than most organisations, to be using research-based practice in all its programmes.

The research was also a springboard for Pillars to commence a range of activities to increase the visibility of the children of prisoners. The organisation adopted such slogans as "collateral convicts", and "not my crime, still my sentence" in campaigns associated with 'children of prisoners' week', which runs each year in September.

The organisation believes that the need for public education on the issues surrounding the children of prisoners is ongoing. There are still significant misconceptions about key issues relating to the children of prisoners. One which will be touched on later in this report is the prevalent view that children should not visit their incarcerated parents. While there is persuasive research evidence that prison visiting is beneficial to all parties[7], and especially when the prison has endeavoured to be child-friendly[8], Pillars frequently comes across the view, expressed in government agencies and prisons, for example, that children should not be 'exposed' to prison life.

The approach from Oranga Tamariki to carry out a pilot study of Family Start within families who had a loved one in prison was, according to senior managers, a very good fit with the Pillars suite of programmes. This was particularly so because the programme was perceived to offer support to the babies and young children of such whānau, whereas the Pillars mentoring programme was and is focussed on those aged five and over.

From the start, Pillars planned to 'add value' to the Family Start model by making available mentors for older children in the Family Start whānau, and by designing a programme with particular features relevant to the whānau. It was widely perceived that, in order to be effective with these whānau, the model would need to be substantially different from the mainstream Family Start model. The actual model as developed will be outlined and examined later in this report.

[7] Dixey, Rachael and Woodall, JR (2012) The significance of 'the visit' in an English category-B prison: Views from prisoners, prisoners' families and prison staff. Community Work and Family (1) 29-47.
[8] Scharff Smith, Peter (2014) Out of the shadows – the children and families of prisoners. Unpublished manuscript, University of Oslo.

Working with the most vulnerable

For the past 15-20 years, there has been widespread acceptance that (a) whānau can work with others to adopt strategies that make them more resilient in the face of adversity and in daily life, and (b) some whānau, by virtue of life experiences, barriers and other factors, are hard for agencies to engage with[9]. This has often meant that, in practice, support targeted at the most in need has not always reached a small group with extreme needs. These are described by Megan Ellis as follows:

> There are a small, but significant number of whānau across Aotearoa who have grown up with chronic toxic stress. The burden of this continues into their adult lives and with their whānau. This makes raising their tamariki in different circumstances and environments very difficult.[10]

Ellis argues that type of programme, sophistication of the model and other factors are barely relevant to engaging these whānau. What is critically important is:

> … *'how'* the whānau experiences and sees the practitioner. This determines whether they will let them through the front door or not. *How you are*, not *what you do* is an essential first test for whānau who have largely found services to be at best 'useless' and at worst 'harmful'.

All parties interviewed for this study agree that the target whānau for the Pillars Family Start programme are likely to fall within this "small but significant" group. Also, given the number of whānau with a loved one in prison, it may be that the number is not as small as might be expected.

In an earlier pilot programme evaluation (2012)[11], it was found that what whānau most value about Pillars' workers is their confidence and ability in navigating through both the justice system and social needs, which is what whānau are required to do on a daily basis.

Issues raised in prior evaluations within Pillars included the difficulties in engaging families, with a focus both on the relationships side but also practical barriers that families may face to inclusion in any programme. One of the key characteristics of Pillars workers has been their ability to engage within the justice system, for example supporting whānau through a trial and the prison system.

The model proposed by Ellis is broadly supported by Pillars staff as the approach needed for the Family Start pilot in Dunedin. It includes three main factors: a kaupapa Māori approach;

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[9] Fergusson, D; Horwood, J and Lynskey, M (1994) The childhoods of multiple problem adolescents: a 15-year longitudinal study. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35, 6, 1123-1140

[10] Ellis, Megan and Bell, Jennifer (2018) Reaching out: developing a framework to engage whānau with multiple and complex needs. Summary report.

[11] Gordon, L (2012) Formative evaluation of Close to Home: a family reintegration pilot programme at Christchurch Mens' Prison. Christchurch: Pillars. Retrieved at http://www.pillars.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Formative-Evaluation-Close-to-Home-Programme.pdf

principles of working in a partnership and working to the cyclical model of listening, action, reflection and adaptation with whānau.

Kaupapa Māori

More than half of all prisoners (around 51%) in Aotearoa are Māori. The next biggest group are pākeha, or white New Zealanders, who make up around 30% of the prison population. Engaging effectively with Māori whānau is therefore at the heart of the work of agencies such as Pillars. According to Ellis's model, Kaupapa underpins engagement. Her framework examines the process of engagement using respectful and empathetic culture-based connections, recognition of self as manuhiri, maintaining a stance of partnership with humility (manaakitanga) and constantly building relationships within and around whānau (whanaungatanga).

Partnership

A partnership model requires a practitioner to both engage with and navigate with whānau to bring about change; to walk alongside them, not in front of or behind them. It is much different to traditional models of intervention in the social services. Ellis describes that the partner plays many different roles: supporter, connector, facilitator and influencer.

The aim is to maintain 'relational priority' over time and through change. How this is achieved will depend upon the nature of the relationship and particular circumstances, which is why Ellis prioritises an empathetic relationship.

A model of practice

The base model of practice proposed by Ellis is "listening, action, reflection and adaptation" with (i.e. not for or apart from) the whānau. A variety of tools were developed to help achieve the cycle, especially the action and reflection phases. The toolkit is seen as an important part of the model, although it is used in a variety of different ways.

The key finding of Ellis's work into working with vulnerable families is that it tends to be slow and process led, and the practitioner needs to have in her head a sense of how the relationship is developing and what constitutes success. One practitioner comments on Ellis's work: "It feels like they think this is the same [way of working], it's not, it's harder and it takes longer and it's exhausting".

This echoes a key theme arising from this evaluation: from the start it emerged that the expected workload of a Family Start worker was much higher than expected using the model developed for this pilot.

Family friendly prisons

There is a widespread debate within society, including with stakeholders and within all New Zealand prisons, over the role of prisons in relation to whānau. Looking internationally, in a 2017 report for the UK House of Commons, Lord Farmer saw family as

the 'golden thread' towards prisoner re-integration. In his report he made three important findings:

- Prisons needed to be outward looking not inward looking. In particular, prisons need to work with external organisations to achieve opportunities for prisoner reintegration and strengthening family ties;

- There are many things that can be done inside prisons to improve services for families and for prisoners wishing to have better relationships with their families; and

- Local community organisations can help build relationships between working with families on the outside and working with prisoners on the inside[12].

In New Zealand, government policies of the past thirty or more years have seen prisons focussing increasingly on internal needs, in particular security. All prisons are what is known internationally as 'closed' prisons, making prison entry in any form a high stakes game, and as a result tending to discourage good whānau relationships and prison visiting.

There are few family-friendly programmes in New Zealand prisons. The best examples are the Family Pathways Centres at Christchurch Men's (low security only) and Invercargill prisons. These aim to provide a child friendly environment and encourage good relationships based on play and key principles of good parenting. The focus is on strengthening whānau relationships, empowering the male prisoners to see themselves as active parents and encouraging prisons to value child visiting.

Picture at left: Face painting during children of prisoners' week, CMP.

Christchurch Men's prison also runs family activities from the Pathways Centre three times a year: Easter, Christmas and Children of Prisoner's week. This involves food and drink, a range of set activities such as face-painting, outside activities for the whānau (in the visiting area courtyard) and presents at Easter and Christmas given out to all children at the gatehouse (i.e. not just in the designated visiting area).

[12] Farmer, Lord. The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime. London: House of Commons (The Farmer Review).

Some prisons also run family fun days for the whānau, although these have tended to taper off in recent years, due to a range of factors: security concerns, prisons being overfull and a lack of resources. Opportunities for such things as homework visits, family sports activities, on-site counselling or navigation where the whānau can meet together and other such options are very limited.

Some of the issues faced in this space are a lack of clear policy focus, difficulties in implementing such services (e.g. resource issues) and variable commitment to implementation across the semi-autonomous Corrections sites and regions. This is primarily an issue of research to practice.

Although there needs to be more work on the particular issues in the New Zealand context, there is a growing amount of international work on both the strengths and the difficulties of family friendly prisons.

Bill of Rights for the children of prisoners

A research/ practice partnership in San Francisco developed a set of principles a number of years ago. The aim was to outline what children should *have a right to, as a child*, in relation to their incarcerated parent. These principles are very relevant to the Family Start programme. Michael Trout's research makes it very clear that young children, and even babies, form their views of life from early experiences, including losing a parent at a very young age to prison[13].

Through the legal processes that precede imprisonment, any rights of the family are shunted aside. It is the individual who stands trial, is convicted and sentenced. The prison systems also do not prioritise the whānau, and it can be weeks before visiting can occur. Children face particular hurdles because there is a strong institutional focus on 'protecting' them, with not enough focus on providing support and participation[14].

The eight 'rights' developed by the partnership have stood the test of time, and are widely considered to be a useful framework for agencies to underpin policies. In 2017, the Department of Corrections adopted the Bill of Rights at a national level, although what that means in practice is fairly unclear. The principles are:

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.
5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.
6. I have the right to support as I face my parent's incarceration.

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[13] Trout, Michael (2018) They Took My Parent Away: Little Ones Affected by Incarceration Speak. In Contemporary Research and Analysis on the Children of Prisoners. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

[14] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child confers three broad categories of rights on children: protection, provision and participation.

7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labelled because my parent is incarcerated.
8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

Summary

There are a number of contextual strands that need to be taken into account when evaluating a programme of this kind. Some are institutional, such as the forms of both whānau programmes and prison systems.

Some are rooted in society, in the alienation of some groups from society and the difficulties in reaching out to them in meaningful ways. Such issues occur around ethnicity and the marginalisation (and sometimes dehumanisation) of those in the prison system. The structures of disadvantage, and the effects on life outcomes, that occur as a result of parental imprisonment are severe; without intervention, many of the children of prisoners face many barriers to a positive future.

This section has focussed also on the framework for practice developed by Megan Ellis and her colleagues, with a focus on working with the 'hardly reached' (as she puts it). A focus on building trust and relationships, and with a focus on navigating 'with' the whānau towards better outcomes.

Finally, the children of prisoners' Bill of Rights is outlined as a potential policy and practice framework for action.

These kite (bags) of knowledge all inform and underpin the evaluation of the Pillars Family Start Plus programme.

Family Start

This section outlines key characteristics of the Family Start programme. It is acknowledged from the start that Pillars was mandated to adapt the service to meet the needs of its clientele, at least in some respects. The adaptations, and reasons for them, are outlined in the next section. This section briefly outlines the main characteristics of the programme.

The Ministry of Health website notes:

> Family Start is an intensive home visiting programme that works with vulnerable 0–5-year-old children and their whānau. It focuses on improving children's growth and health, learning and relationships, family circumstance, environment and safety[15].

The three main aims of Family Start are to help:

- improve health, education and social outcomes for children
- improve parents' parenting capability and practice, and
- improve children's and parents' personal and family circumstances.

There are over 40 providers across Aotearoa. These are community-based organisations who are contracted to provide the service, and who often run a range of other services as well. The programme is designed to reach 7,200 whānau each year.

The Family Start programme and processes are tightly prescribed within the Family Start Programme Manual, which is available online[16].

It is an intensive programme, which means in practice that each whānau will be visited weekly at first. The aim is to work with the whānau to encourage planning, ensure good child health, connect with other agencies to support effective change and facilitate good parenting practice.

In a 2016 quasi-experimental design (where Family Start whānau were matched with whānau with similar profiles), the most robust outcome was clear evidence that Family Start reduced post-neonatal infant mortality and increased participation in Early Childhood Education[17].

Referral to Family Start requires adherence to relatively tight criteria. One or more of the following must be present for referral: parent/carer has mental health issues; parent/carer has drugs, alcohol or gambling issues; parent/carer experienced abuse as a child; the whānau has a care and protection history; there is evidence of significant relationship

[15] https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/life-stages/child-health/well-child-tamariki-ora-services/family-start-and-universal-health-services
[16] https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Family-Start/190129-OT-Family-Start-Manual-PDF-Final.pdf
[17] https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/family-start-outcomes-study/key-findings.html#Keyfindings3

problems, including violence, conflict and/or instability; the parent is very young and faces additional challenges.

In the absence of one of these, a series of 'indicators of potential need' may provide an alternative route to acceptance on the programme, considered on a case by case basis. These are: lacks support networks; lack of financial and material resources; frequent change of address; low parent education; SUDI factors (related to baby health and development); or involvement in the criminal justice system[18].

The age of the child at referral must be from pre-natal to twelve months of age. Under exceptional circumstances this may be extended to two years. The client is essentially the baby, but in practice the whole whānau is included. A contract of participation is signed by the carer/s.

It is a long-term intervention, and families may stay in the programme until the child reaches five years of age, but not beyond. If the whānau needs further intervention, the home-based care scheme is available for older tamariki.

The programme is intensive. Maximum caseload for each worker is 16, reflecting the high needs nature of the clientele overall. For each seven Family Start workers there will be one supervisor.

It is expected that the Family Start worker meet with the whānau for one hour a week for at least the first three months. Then an assessment of progress is made and the worker will continually to meet weekly or start visiting fortnightly, depending on progress. Workers are expected to have a 'balanced' workload, reflecting both more and less intensive casework.

The notion that Family Start whānau may be difficult to reach is embedded into the model. When referred by another agency, a Family Start worker will make multiple attempts to engage with the whānau.

The prescribed number of such attempts, by all possible means, is six, and it must occur within five working days. If a client is not engaged after six attempts, or if at any time attempts over six weeks fails to contact them, the client will be exited from the Family Start programme.

The core of the Family Start programme is the home visit, although in exceptional circumstances the visit may be conducted outside of the home.

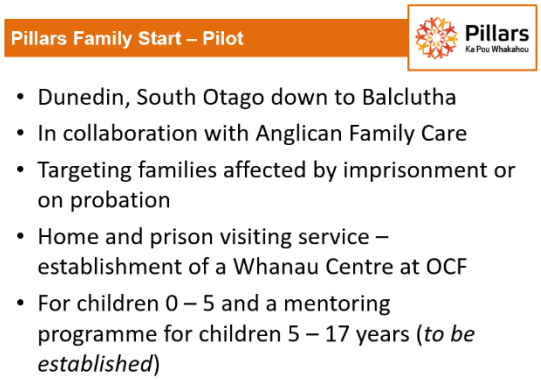
The orientation of the programme and workers is to be strengths-based, and this approach is supported by the programme materials, including the SKIP practice tools. There is also a significant focus on child safety.

In summary, the Family Start programme has a large reach across high risk whānau and has over 500 staff around the country. Quality and purpose are maintained through a tightly

[18] Family start referral guide. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Family-Start/Family-Start-referral-guide.pdf

prescribed manual that sets out every part of the work. It has been evaluated as a model that is successful in engaging at-risk whanau and keeping tamariki safe.

However, there are still a proportion of whānau who are not effectively engaged by the Family Start model. The senior management team at Oranga Tamariki adjudged that one such group were whānau where at least one parent was in prison or community justice.



They approached Pillars in late 2017 to consider how to improve performance with that group, and the pilot programme being evaluated here was born in early 2018. During the process, Pillars gave a presentation on how the contract might be achieved. The slide shown here outlined the core elements of the programme as intended. As will be discussed below, all the elements of the programme as envisaged are now in place and operating.

The programme as developed is outlined in the next section of the report.

Programme design and development

The preceding sections have provided all the contextual factors being used to frame this study. They are the numbers and situation of the children of prisoners, the prior work of Pillars, working with the most vulnerable groups, family-friendly prisons and the Family Start programme. There are also a number of broader frames, such as poverty and income inequality, penal policy and ethnicity which inevitably impact on the work described here.

This section is about describing the programme logic specifically developed for the Pillars Family Start plus programme. When Pillars was asked to design a programme that would meet the needs of families in the shadow of the justice system, it became clear early on that, in order to serve the most vulnerable families, there needed to be a way to reach out to incarcerated parents and offer them hands-on parenting skills, presumably within the secure environment.

As far as any of those interviewed for this project are aware, no Family Start service has built in parent/ child relationship building with a parent who is in prison or otherwise involved in the justice system. This was the mandate given to Pillars: "We were told, please develop a programme that will address the retention rate of families of prisoners on the FS programme and keep them engaged[19].

As this had not been done before, there was no guidebook on how this could be achieved, or what the programme would look like, except the instruction that it would be a recognisable Family Start programme.

The programme initiator, Simone, was appointed into the position in February 2018. Her background was in working in programmes within OCF, and she had a strong knowledge of the system and people there. At the time of her appointment she had no office, no Pillars support in Dunedin (her manager was in Christchurch) and no prior knowledge of the Family Start programme. She said: "They said 'there's the manual, off you go'. So I did".

The brief she received from Pillars was slightly more detailed: "Please create the programme. Interview both parents regarding relationships, work with families in prison and community with parenting programmes. The father must be in prison or on community service".

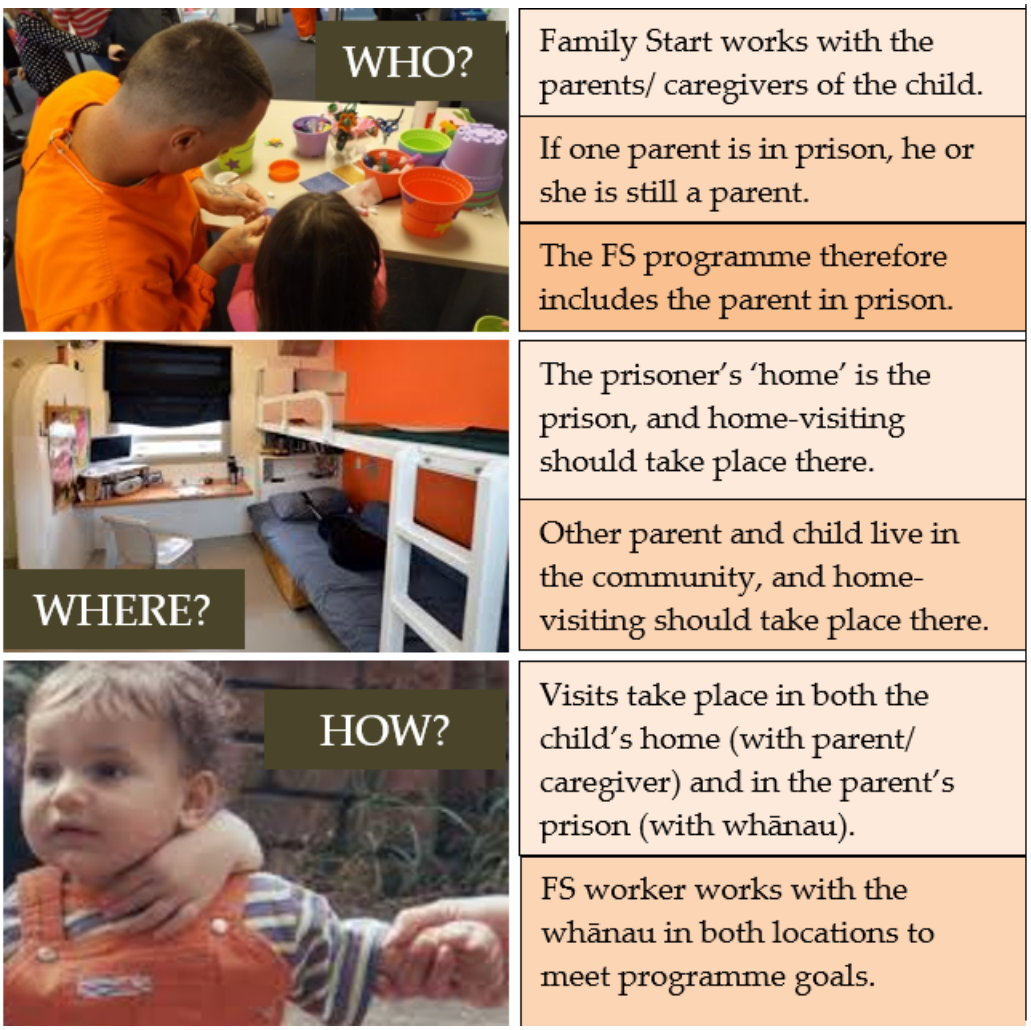
An arrangement was made for Simone to be given office space within the Dunedin office of Anglican Family Care, an agency that runs many programmes including Family Start. The intention was that this was a place where Simone could get a lot of support.

A distinctive programme

Family Start is a programme designed to provide navigation for parents/ whānau/ caregivers in bringing up babies. It "helps whānau who are struggling with challenges or problems that may make it harder for them to care for their baby or young child", according

[19] Interview with Simone, February 2019 .

to one pamphlet[20]. In those whānau where one parent is in prison, but the parents are still in a relationship, the risk is that the programme is not provided to all caregivers in practice. Apart from occasional visits, that may not be very satisfactory due to internal constraints. The initial logic developed for this specific programme can be summarised in the following graphic:



Family Start workers and team leaders from Anglican Family Care were interviewed for the evaluation about whether a design involving both home and prison sites was actually a point of departure for Family Start work.

One noted: "For me it was around, are we going to be competing for the same client? But we can't actually do what's needed. With the intensity that is required, we wouldn't have time to do this".

Another noted: "Initially I thought, so what does this mean for Dunedin?... There was a degree of 'what was this all about'. But, actually, it has made us think about our own programme. This is such a vulnerable cohort. How are we as a Family Start programme engaging with prisoners?"

[20] Anglican Family Care "Family Start" pamphlet.

The workers noted they had also picked up valuable skills through the Megan Ellis training. They have also come to the realisation that "too often guys in prison are dealt with in isolation from their families until they come out. The children have a right to be parented by both parents".

From the point of view of the Anglican Care managers and Family Start workers, the Pillars programme is *different* from what they already offer, it is *distinct* from their own programme in how it works, they have *learned* from the programme in terms of dealing with the most vulnerable and they have very much *enjoyed* working alongside Simone.

The prison context: negotiating entry

The Department of Corrections website notes that: "Otago Corrections Facility (OCF) is located near Milton in the lower South Island. OCF was one of four new prisons that opened between 2005 and 2007. A highly secure perimeter fence encloses a large open space containing a range of separate buildings for accommodation and services".

It was built primarily as a 'regional' facility, which means in principle that the goal was to house prisoners from the Otago region. However, in practice the prison has always housed people from around the country.

The capacity of the facility at the time of opening was 335 beds, but in 2017 that was increased to 484, with the expectation that about half of prisoners would be double-bunked. The prison filled up very quickly after opening. The following figure shows the number of remand and sentenced prisoners in December of each year from 2009 to 2018[21].

As a prison outside of a main population area, OCF has always worked to support whānau engagement. It offers flexible visiting hours, visitor email, access to AVL (remote visiting electronically) sites and other whānau-sensitive systems.

[21] https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/research_and_statistics/quarterly_prison_statistics.html

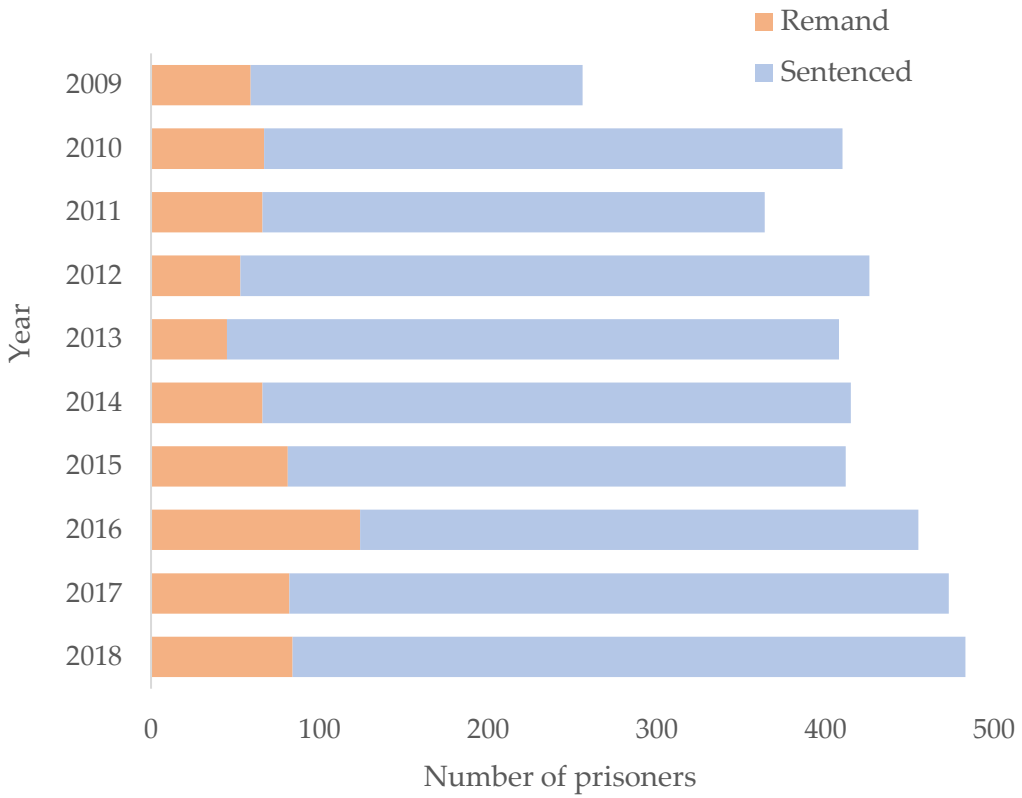


Figure 1. No. sentenced and remand prisoners, December, over 10 years, OCF.

The overall pattern shows the prison full or nearly full for the past three years (it was reported there were 522 prisoners at one point in 2018[22]).

In interviews for this project, there was significant support expressed by a range of OCF senior staff for the Pillars Family Start programme and also wider family-oriented reform. For example, the visiting centre is acknowledged as not being particularly family- or child-friendly. The large room has a lot of fixed seating with little room between the seats. Prisoners are not allowed to stand up or move around during the visit, so there is little opportunity for play. There are active plans for re-design of this part of the prison.

In terms of the Family Start programme, by the time of the evaluation visit to the prison in February 2019, there was extremely strong support expressed by all of those interviewed for this project. At the same time, the limitations of the programme were also clearly stated by all staff interviewed in the prison.

Simone noted in her interview that developing and presenting the programme with the prison took a number of weeks – 12 to 16 – and required a large amount of relationship-building, discussion and planning. In her favour was Simone's own engaging personality and the fact that she was well-known and trusted within OCF, having previously worked there. In terms of this being the first, the pilot, programme, there was no blueprint to follow so there was a need to work out what was possible and what was not.

[22] https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/many-fear-milburn-prison

Negotiating a model within the prison that works

Simone began the process by talking with the relevant managers within the prison, to gain permission to engage in the process. "The pre-existing relationship was crucial. If you don't have that, there will be no trust. If no trust, then it will be hard to convince the prison that your programme will be safe, that it will remain within acceptable boundaries, that guidelines will be clear and that the interactions and interviews with the prisoners will be robust."

The development period was difficult for Simone. "It was stressful – nearly killed me! But I loved it". With permission to explore the possibility of a programme, she began by talking to the case managers at the prison and probation officers in the community. Every prisoner has a case manager, who works with them and provides a gateway to navigate the sentence, go onto programmes and take part in educational activities. One case manager describes their role as follows:

> Programmes, education, motivation, making a plan. We see them (prisoners) regularly and work with them on risk, needs and taking responsibility. We develop a release plan, make referrals and write parole reports. We make referrals to mental health clinicians. We help them meet their cultural needs. It is not our mandate to facilitate or promote any programme. We pass on any requests to the scheduler who controls entry to courses and programmes.

Simone began her discussions with the case managers by outlining background knowledge about the work of Pillars and the goals of the programme. One case manager recalls: "the goals were to bring the prisoner and the family together, to open communications between the prisoner and his family, and to work to resolve family issues while the prisoner was still in prison".

Simone received enthusiastic support for the programme from the case managers and more broadly within the prison. A senior manager in the prison noted: "It takes a long time for the Corrections mindset to change, but we are working slowly, working towards family friendly prisons, looking at different ideas and programmes, working in multi-disciplinary ways".

A process was agreed that the case managers would manage potential entry to the programme and make referrals, by identifying potential prisoner parents and referring them to Simone, who would undertake a screening interview to ensure eligibility of the whānau, and then consulting with the caregiver outside prison. Only after a detailed and inclusive process would the first visit take place.

Another issue that needed to be agreed was the venue for the whānau visits. The initial visit which includes assessment and agreement to proceed was to be held in a side room in the visiting centre. However, due to overcrowding and a lack of privacy, this room is not suitable for the full FS sessions with parents and child.

Early on, the prison team identified a space called the 'whare' as the best place for the regular meetings. This is a large meeting room in the centre of the prison. It is a nice space,

it has a small kitchen and other facilities. The space allows for play, for the child to run around and a home-like freedom. A prison officer sits in the whare during meetings with the whānau. The content of the meetings is described below.

Despite some frustrations with the programme, discussed later in this report, staff at the prison are highly supportive of the programme. They are looking for long-term change in the relationship between whānau and the prison, and Family Start provides one way to achieve this.

The NZ prison system has not been used to catering for relationship-building between prisoners and their children. From the start of Pillars' research in 2009, people from all parts of the system have questioned whether children should visit parents in prison at all[23].

The view that children should not visit at the prison was expressed once during the prison interviews, as a stakeholder's personal view. For a project like this to succeed, there is a need to ensure that all stakeholders are educated on the research that demonstrates whānau engagement with prisoner parents is likely to improve, not harm, child outcomes[24].

[23] Gordon (2009), op cit.

[24] Ibid. The NZ research, along with other studies, shows that maintaining a relationship with a loved parent during incarceration can prevent harm to the child. At the 2017 INCCIP conference held in Rotorua, New Zealand, US child Madeleine Strempek explained that a child's love for a parent does not diminish because s/he is in prison. Being apart from a loved parent can be very damaging, a damage that can be mitigated by good contact. Similarly, the work being done at the Family Unit at Parc prison in Wales, with children doing homework with their incarcerated Dads, shows that the daunting entry/ search requirements are not harmful to the children – they take them in their stride. See the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tWp3e440QE.

The programme in action

Having examined the context and process of development, this section now looks at the programme as it has been designed. While unmistakably a Family Start service, the added element of the prison context, working specifically with the father and the particular difficulties in working with the most vulnerable, give the service a different pattern, as confirmed by the FS workers at Anglican Family Care.

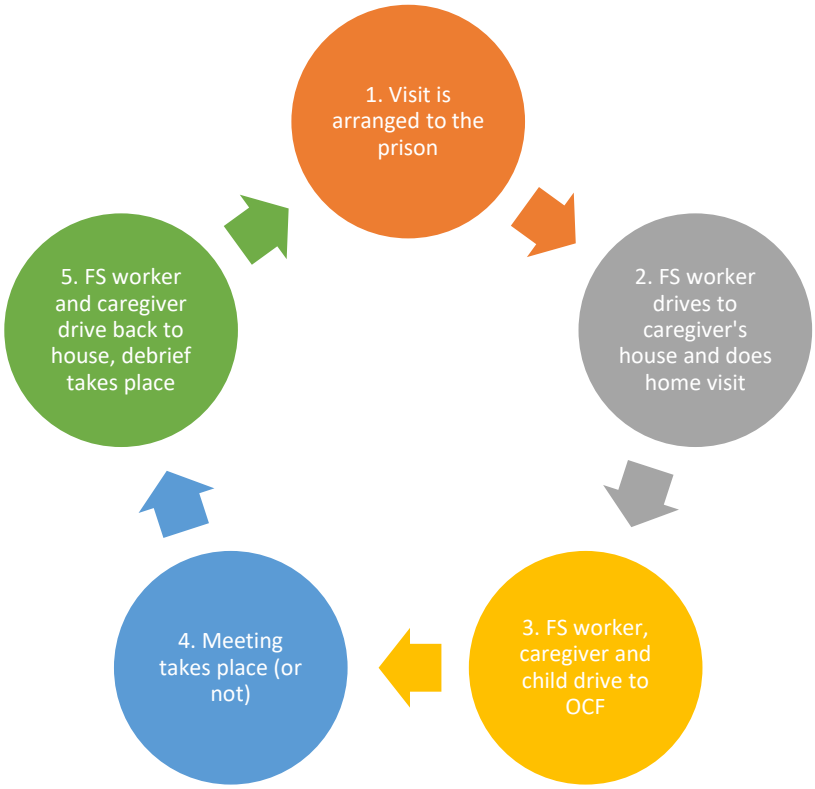
The starting point is the process of referral. In the FS model, referral criteria include involvement in the justice system only as an 'indicator of potential need'. We were told that, in reality, this was generally used only as in indicator relating to the non-custodial caregiver, and that parents in prison were 'left out' from the FS model. The Pillars model inverts the FS criteria, and places involvement in the justice system as the key criterion with the other main factors occurring alongside. As the Treasury study discussed earlier makes clear, families with an incarcerated parent are also likely to have other vulnerabilities, such as child abuse notifications, benefit-led families or low maternal education. Factors such as gang membership are important also. With 11 gangs in the Dunedin area, many men involved in the justice system are connected to these.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Who can refer? Prison case managers, Community Corrections, increasing over time referrals from other agencies and other FS providers. Currently negotiating with the police and other potential referral agencies.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Criteria for referral: involvement in criminal justice system plus other indicators of need in whānau.</td></tr>
<tr><td>In prison: initial meeting with prisoner and then visit with whānau in community, assess eligibility and willingness of all parties to participate.</td><td>In community: initial meeting with whānau to assess eligibility and get commitment to participate in programme.</td></tr>
</table>

When one of the partners is in prison, the process from initial approach to signing up the whānau takes a lot of time and energy. Once signed up, the initial meeting is held in a side room off the main visiting area. This is a good location for carrying out the business of contracting the whānau, but unsuitable for active child visits. There is little privacy and the location is very close to the busy visits area.

There are numerous constraints in keeping the focus on both prison and community parts of the whānau. Ideally, there would be a significant (1 hour plus) meeting of the whole whānau with the FS worker each week. This would need to take place 'behind the wire' in the prison. As well, the worker needs to visit the child's home on a regular basis to carry out all the required health and well-being tasks and work with the home-based caregiver.

The Otago Correctional Facility is located around 50 km south of Dunedin. It takes around 40 minutes to drive there from the central city in light traffic. Depending on where the non-custodial caregiver and the child live, the process is as follows:



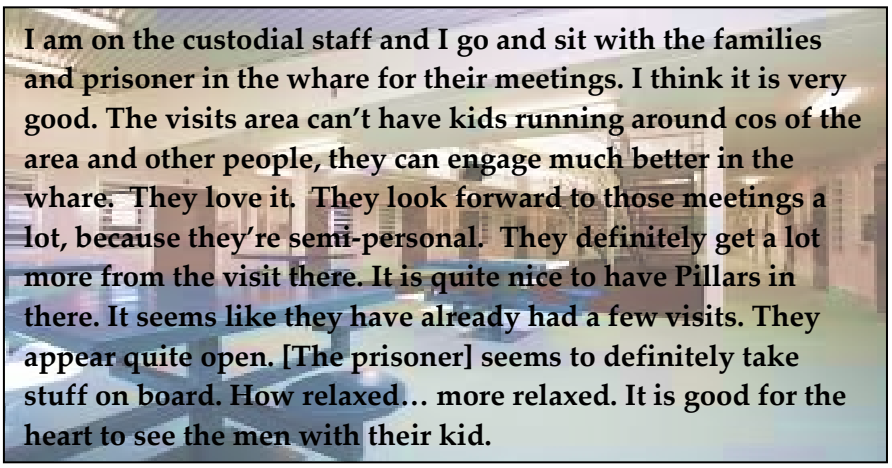
Ideally, these visits will take place weekly or at least fortnightly. The worker also needs to make additional visits to both home and prison to support the caregivers. With a minimum of 3 hours and a maximum of 5-6 hours per visit, the weekly visiting takes at least 3 times as long as traditional FS visits when a caregiver is in prison.

One FS worker pointed out that there were potential advantages to the model when working with families that are 'hardly reached'. Driving in a car an hour or so each way, where there is little chance of eye contact, provides good opportunities to break the conversational ice and even impart some good parenting topics.

After the first visit to the prison, the designated venue for whānau visits is the 'whare'. This is a well-used space that needs to be booked well in advance. Unfortunately, there are times when a booking has to be rescinded at the last minute which has happened on occasion over the period of the project. There is no other appropriate visiting area for these visits on site, so it means the sessions have to be cancelled.

The visits to the whare are well-planned. Simone carries 'The Bag', which contains everything that is needed for the visit. This includes things for the baby, toys, tea, coffee, milk, biscuits. Simone offers a range of activities within the session, including parenting help, developmental activities and support for the whānau.

A Corrections officer sits in the whare all the time for safety and security purposes. One of these was interviewed for this evaluation and provided the following reflections:



Prison staff are enthusiastic about the programme and wish to see it expand, in particular to embrace older children. Questions remain about a dedicated space within the prison for effective whānau meetings.

Kaupapa Māori

Simone uses two specific approaches that lie at the heart of kaupapa Māori practices. As manuhiri, she is always aware of her status as coming from outside, and never takes acceptance of her role for granted. This is not just words. Simone explained that, in visiting the whānau, she never takes her role for granted, but, at every meeting and stage, is always seeking permission. As well as being good cultural practice, it is prudent because of the vulnerable nature of the community and the often complex and fragile connections she is able to make with complex cases, for example when there is gang involvement.

The two strategies that she specifically adopts are Manaakitanga, which is about engagement and involvement of all, and Whanāungatanga, which is specifically about acknowledging and respecting the whānau.

Simone engages warmly with everyone she meets in the course of her job. In her workplace, she interacts all the time with her own team but also the wider Anglican Family Care whānau. She is also actively engaged with a number of other agencies in Dunedin city, such as the Police, Community Corrections and various social service agencies. At the prison, she appears to know every single staff member, their roles and key facts about them. She goes out of her way to greet people. As a result, all of the people interviewed spoke extremely highly of her and felt that the success of this complex project rested very much on her engagement skills. Her engagement approach is both natural to her and also employed deliberately to ensure ongoing support for her work.

Her whanāungatanga approach has shaped the project to a great extent. While Pillars in other centres supports the whānau through its social work and mentoring services, these programmes rarely engage directly with the prisoner-parents – it is not part of the service specifications. From the start, Simone has mandated prisoner involvement in all aspects of the programme:

> The expectations of [prisoner] parents are very high. We develop an agreement with them that they are going to co-parent in the relationship. We have discussions with Mums and Dads about their goals. What do you want for your child? We focus on building a relationship with Dad. Ideally, we would like to be visiting the Dad at least once a fortnight, but time, distance, workload… all make it hard.

The service has just commenced a mentoring programme to match older children in the whānau into a mentoring relationship (no matches had been made at the point of the evaluation, but volunteers were being given training towards taking on such roles, and tamariki in the whānau were being identified). Compared to the other centres running such programmes, prisoner fathers are far more involved in the process, both being consulted about their child having a mentor, and giving their permission to move forward on mentoring. Once the fathers have the role explained to them, they have been keen for their tamariki to participate.

Two case studies below explore aspects of how the programme works in practice.

Hera and Tane

Hera (name changed) is a mother of one baby and one older child, living in Central Otago. The evaluator and Simone visited her in February 2019. She heard about the Pillars programme from three sources. First, an ex-partner told her about it. Second, she saw the poster ('of a hunky male and a baby') at the prison. Third, another Mum on the programme, whose Dad was in the same unit as Tane (partner, name changed) told him "Oh bro, you need to get to Pillars". Tane contacted Simone but gave her Hera's number wrong, then the friend gave Hera Simone's information. Hera got in touch by email.

Hera had strong ideas about why she was getting in touch: "I wanted not to be in that environment with the kids. I wanted him to be able to interact and chase the kids around and sort of give me a parenting rest. Share the work."

Hera explained that the normal visiting environment at OCF is very restricted: "If I go to the toilet, I have to go into the booth[25]. I wanted to be able to breast feed normally, not go and squat in a corner or sit on the floor, and feel OK about it. Also bring in things for the kids to eat.

"Mainly", she said, "I wanted him to be able to interact with his Dad".

Hera had been told by others that if she was part of the Pillars programme, she would "go to the whare". She was told this was good but did not know what it meant. "There was a rumour that you got coffee…. I didn't know how that would work".

[25] A booth is where the whānau sit on one side of a glass partition, and the prisoner sits on the other side. In many prisons, if a parent has to go to the toilet, take a child to the toilet or change a nappy, they are not allowed back into the main visiting area afterwards, for security reasons.

So Hera emailed Simone and the whānau signed up to the programme. It was important to Hera that Simone be at the visits, so that Hera didn't have to spend the whole time teaching Tane how to parent.

There was a long wait from Simone first coming to meet Hera to starting the visits – she thinks about 11-12 weeks. The first visit was held in the side room off the visiting area. "It went quite well. It was kind of weird. Really unnatural, we didn't know what to do".

After that regular visits were started in the whare, with the aiming of forming the whānau relationships and building a safe and nurturing attachment with father and child – mother and father – mother father and child with a co parenting focus.

A whānau goal was to support whānau to communicate in a more assertive way. One topic was to consider communication styles and issues of power and control. About then Tane started "doing stuff, being an idiot".

He was getting very jealous: "are you getting it on?". There was a big argument followed by a couple of letters. One arrived on the morning that Hera and Simone were going on a visit. Due to content within the letter Simone postponed the visit and implemented a safety plan which included support to Hera and aimed at ensuring safety and support for all.

Simone has formed a strong bond with Hera. She helped her get a proper fireguard for her large log burner. Hera was worried that she would lose Simone if she stopped visiting Tane, but Simone reiterated that the child was the primary client and that due to the complexities of the whānau circumstances that Pillars would continue to engage with the whānau at this time.

She was asked what Simone offers to her future. Hera noted that she was still dealing with a lot of issues, still forming relationships. "I am still going through it. Simone has got my back. I trust her with my life".

Hera said that the best thing for the programme going forward was to "clone Simone".

Hera's story has a number of important elements. The first was that the first contact was initiated by Hera is order to get a better visiting environment for her whānau in prison. She graphically outlined the difficulties or being a breast-feeding Mum visiting the prison. Her meeting with another Mum on the programme made her decide to go ahead. Although Hera had a range of issues going on in her life, she reached out over the visiting matter, nor her other problems.

Second, the visits in the whare made an immediate difference to the parenting relationship. Tane began to feel very much more that he was part of the whanau and should have a role in parenting the baby. Unfortunately, this also triggered some problem thinking and behavioural responses that resulted in the postponement of his interaction at this time.

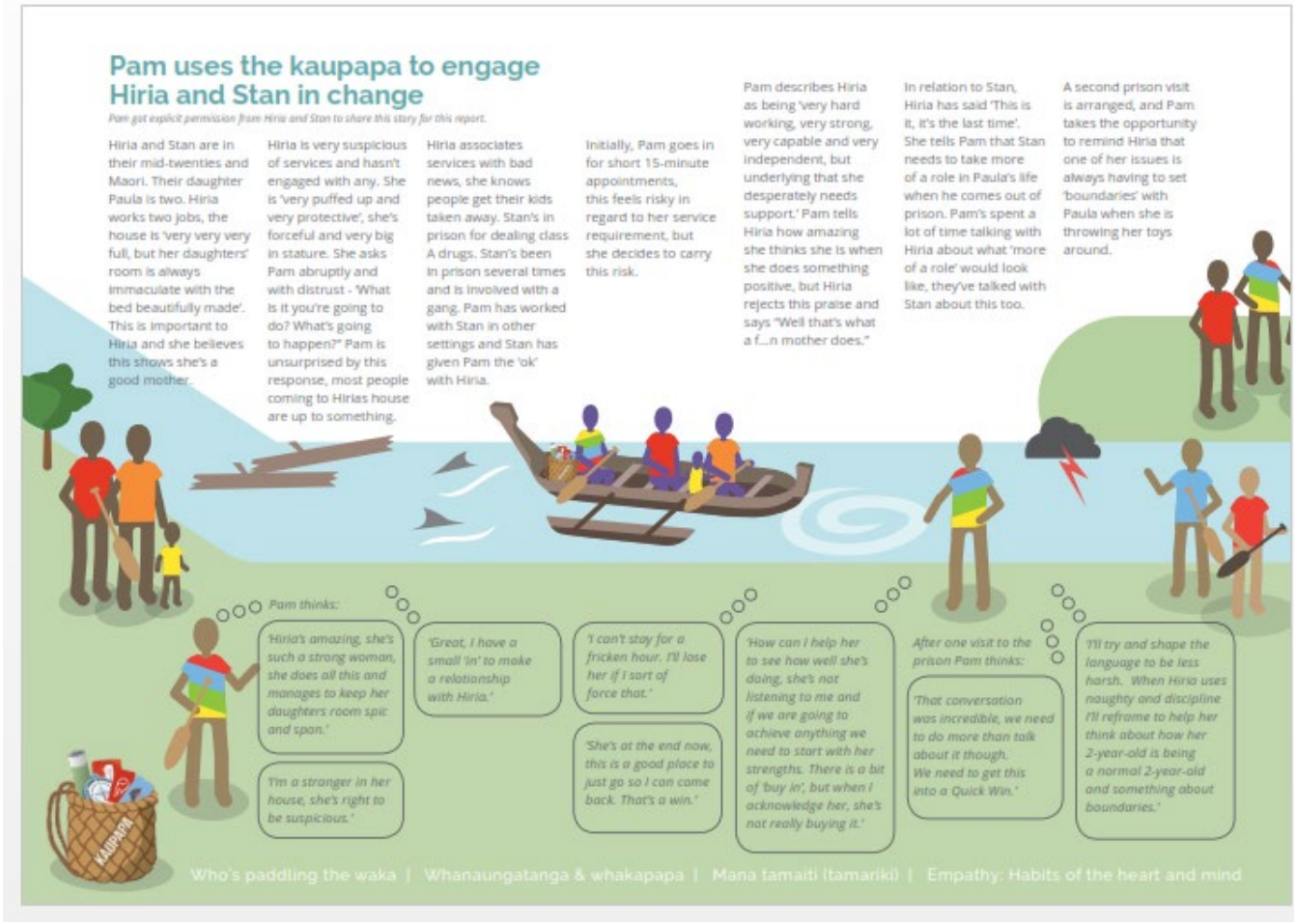
Third, the whole process brought Hera much closer to Simone. In the past, Hera has not trusted agencies to work with her. A high level of trust was built up, which allowed Simone

to work closely with Hera on many of her own parenting and whānau issues. This is an ongoing process.

At the time of the evaluation visit to Dunedin, Simone felt that no other whānau were in the space to be visited by the evaluator. However, Simone did point the evaluator to a case study that had been completed for Megan Ellis's report on developing a framework for working with whānau with multiple and complex needs.

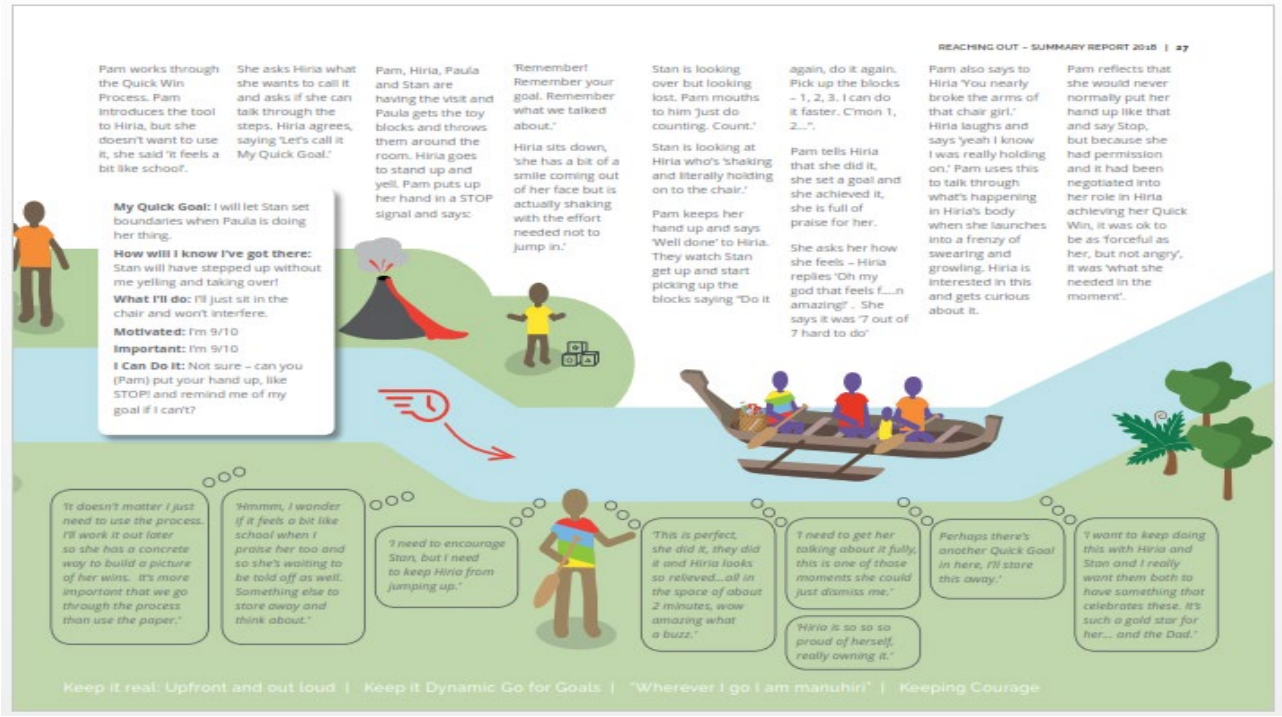
Hiria and Stan

Hiria and Stan had a range of issues around parenting their young daughter. Hiria has a lot of pressures on her and Stan is in prison. The case study below, and on the next page, examines how 'Pam' was able to apply the principles and tools of the Family Start programme in the extreme environment of the prison, and make it a learning moment for the whānau.



A key issue here is that Hiria is very distrustful of Pam's motives, and not at all open to letting Pam into her life. She patrols the boundaries of her parenting assiduously, even though she clearly needs support:

At first the visits with Hiria are short (much shorter than the 60 minutes per week guidelines of the Family Start manual). However, as the relationship develops a partnership emerges where Simone makes suggestions and Hiria takes control of the kaupapa.



As shown below, the quick 'win' process becomes the quick 'goal', as winning sounds "too much like school". They also take time to celebrate when a quick goal is achieved:

The main implication of this account is that the engagement model developed by Megan Ellis, and used by Family Start, can be highly successful within the Pillars programme in terms, particularly of setting and achieving small goals.

Those in Community Corrections

The home-to-prison element of the programme is by far the most complex, time-consuming and difficult, and offers the most unique aspects of the programme. However, either initially or over time, most prisoners end up back in the community after release on parole, often subject to conditions. As well, whanau subject to Community Corrections are also able to be referred to the project. They may be actively serving a sentence of community service, and/ or may have an ankle bracelet and limitations on movement (home detention).

The numbers on community sentences and orders has fallen by around 10,000 over the past decade, with around 36,000 on such sentences in December 2018[26]. At that date, in Otago, 1463 people were on community service, home detention, parole or supervision. Nationally, half of all such people were aged 25-40 and 20% were women. There is anecdote but no firm evidence that women with children are more likely to get community service so they can

[26]https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/research_and_statistics/community_sentences_and_orders/community_stats_december_2018.html

continue to parent their children. Māori are more likely to be imprisoned (51% of total) than receive a community sentence (44%). Given the age, gender and ethnic composition of the national statistics, many of the participants in these programmes are likely to be parents of young children (there are no statistics on this).

People on community sentences are often subject to complex orders around where they may live and who they may see, which the Pillars FS scheme has to navigate. As we were unable to interview anyone in this space, and the focus was on the prison environment, further information is not available at this point. The particular needs of those on community sentences should be examined as part of a future study.

The programme now

The programme in Dunedin now has 2.25 FTE, well above the 1 FTE funded by Oranga Tamariki. Due to the high intensity of the community/ prison model, a .5 FS worker has been employed and funded by Pillars to work with Simone in meeting the expected caseload of her contract.

In addition, a .75 staff person has been appointed as a mentoring co-ordinator. From the start, Pillars intended to add further value to the Pillars FS model by organising a mentoring scheme for the older tamariki in the whānau getting FS support.

By February 2019 the part-time mentoring co-ordinator had been appointed and was focussed on establishing the mentoring programme in Dunedin. This has commenced with working to attract mentors into the programme and training them. At this point no matches can be made.

The mentoring programme is only available to those receiving whānau support through Family Start. In practice, this encompasses only the older (5+) siblings of a child who is the target of the FS programme. The new mentoring co-ordinator expressed some frustrations about this: "I am a bit hamstrung. My role is dependent on [the FS worker relationships with whānau]".

She estimates that there are about 12-13 children currently eligible for matches. The approach developed, which differs from the mentoring programmes in other areas of Pillars, is the use of a whānau-centred model. This means that the worker will need to visit and engage with both the prisoner-parent as well as the caregiver in the community, to get whānau support before a child can be matched with a mentor.

At the point of the evaluation, the Pillars FS scheme had been operating fully for 8 months (launched in July 2018, after scheme was negotiated with all parties). There are 13 cases on the books, with all referrals either from a probation officer or a prison case manager. There are plans to widen the referrals to other groups, especially the police, but concern this will lead to far too many cases for the current resourcing of the Pillars team to manage.

In the period to date, around 30 cases have been referred that have had to be declined. Requests have come from Gore, Invercargill and Oamaru, all outside of the region. Also, multiple enquiries have been received from the District Health Board, Police, and prison and community links that have had to be declined, either because the child's age is out of scope or the parent is being released to another region.

The list of current cases (names and other information redacted to maintain privacy) is on the next page.

Whanau	Location	Age of child	Relationship Status	Issues
1	CC	12 mths	Ex partners	Referred by probation officer. AOD, mental health issues. OT involved. Parents want to co-parent
2	CC	10 mths	In a relationship	Referred by probation officer. Father seeking support for MH problems, mother in programme
3	OCF	15 mths	In a relationship	Father said he had learned skills. Mother being supported re MH and AOD concerns. Gang issues
4	OCF	24 mths	In a relationship	Referred by case manager. Whānau goals re AOD, MH, improved communication, attachment, parenting skills. Gang links
5	OCF	16 mths	Were in a relationship	Referred by case manager. Whānau goals re AOD, MH, parenting skills. Not met baby yet. Gang links
6	OCF	15 mths	In a relationship	Referred by case manager. Whānau goals re AOD, MH, parenting skills. Not met baby yet. Housing issues.
7	CC	20 mths	In a relationship	Referred by probation officer. Working on mother's reliance, OT issues, advocacy for housing, mental health and well being and police re protection orders. Anti-social thinking and gang affiliations.
8	CC	6 wks	In a relationship	Referred by Probation Officer. Goals around anger management, attachment, socialisation and parenting skills.
9	OCF	18 mths	In a relationship	Referred by case manager. Goals re relationships, gang links, attachment, MH, problem thinking and decision making.
10	CC	Unborn	In a relationship	Referred by probation officer. High risk pregnancy with AOD concerns. Gang links.
11	CC	24 mths	Not in a relationship	Referred by probation officer. Parents separated but co-parenting. Range of goals.
12	OCF	Unborn	In a relationship	Referred by probation officer. Dad in prison. MH, AOD, violence, attachment, gang links
13	OCF	15 mths	Not in a relationship	Referred by case manager. Focus on attachment, violence issues, problem thinking, plus parenting skills, education.

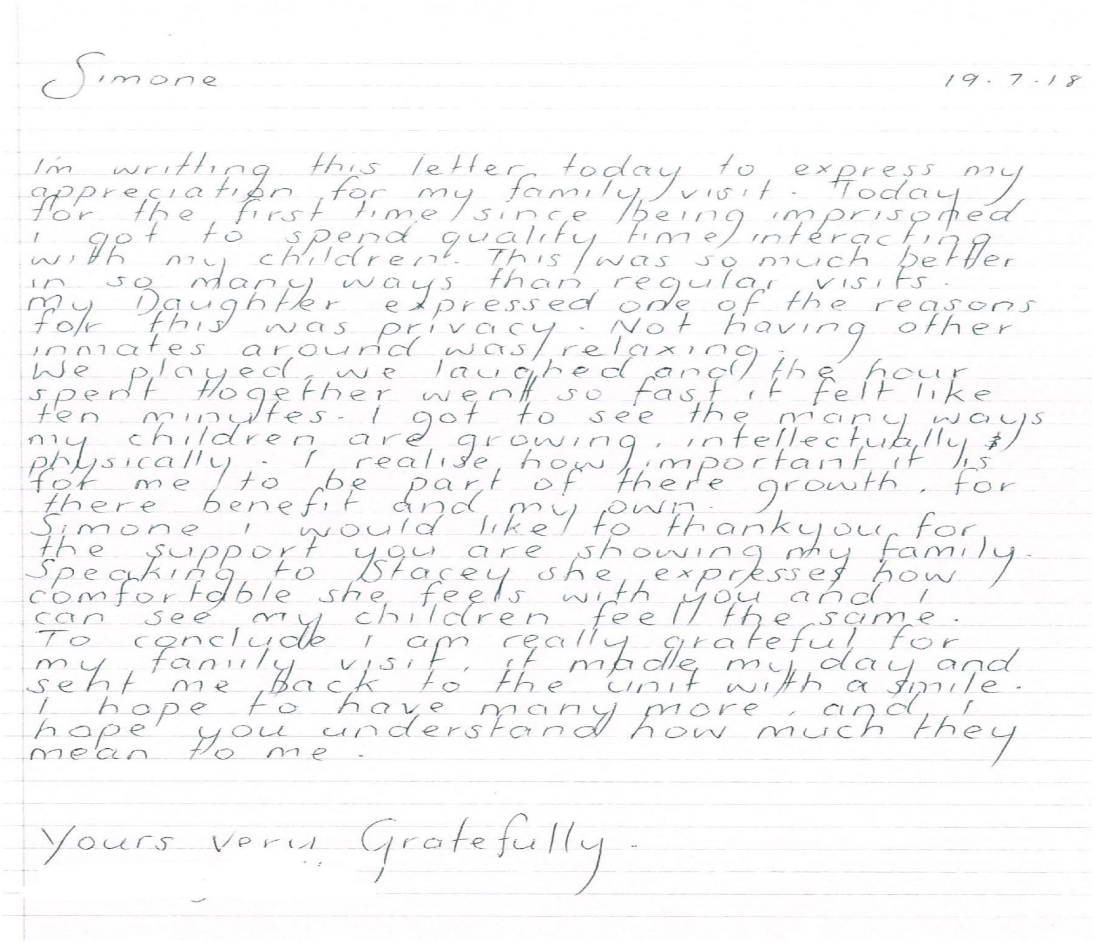
Comments received by both parents expresses strong satisfaction with the programme to date. Simone seeks feedback from all the clients. The fathers express their gratitude that Pillars are working with them, and also supporting the whānau and child. A few comments:

> *I find myself getting closer and closer with [partner]. Each time I see them makes me proud and happy and today she said thanks to me for reading her a book.*

Great day today. Each time I see them our bond gets stronger and stronger…every [Pillars] visit gets better and better…can't wait to get out and do what we wrote on our posters.

The advocacy really supports me to feel heard by others.

One prisoner wrote a letter to the Pillars FS:



Simone 19.7.18

Im writting this letter today to express my appreciation for my family visit. Today for the first time since being imprisoned I got to spend quality time interacting with my children. This was so much better in so many ways than regular visits. My Daughter expressed one of the reasons for this was privacy. Not having other inmates around was relaxing. We played, we laughed and the hour spent together went so fast it felt like ten minutes. I got to see the many ways my children are growing, intellectually & physically. I realise how important it is for me to be part of there growth, for there benefit and my own. Simone I would like to thank you for the support you are showing my family. Speaking to Stacey she expressed how comfortable she feels with you and I can see my children feel the same. To conclude I am really grateful for my family visit, it made my day and sent me back to the unit with a smile. I hope to have many more, and I hope you understand how much they mean to me.

Yours very Gratefully.

Others also express their gratitude. A number of them have declined social agency support in the past. One mother said: "Pillars will support me so that other agencies do not become involved." Other feedback from mothers praises the support they are given, enjoys the skills and education provided, notes the importance of the advocacy and:

I want to say a huge thank you for being there and helping me and [child] through all of this. And helping me rebuild [the relationship with the partner].

It is very early in the life of this programme, and it is significant that so many changes are already being experienced by the whānau. Nevertheless, these families have multiple issues to work through and face ongoing disadvantage. The knowledge that the relationships built up through the Pillars FS programme are focussed on the medium to long term provide hope for long-term change in the lives of the whānau, and better opportunities for the babies as they grow up.

Key issues

The evaluation has brought up a number of key issues for Pillars, OCF and the FS leadership to consider for the future of the programme. Some also have implications for national systems.

1. **Success of the programme to date**

The first thing that needs to be acknowledged is that the task set for Simone – to create an effective intervention in a way that has never been done before – has been strongly achieved within the first year of the programme, with plenty of promise, and widespread support, to build further on the kaupapa.

There are some important matters that need to be resolved in moving forward. The first one is that it needs to be acknowledged that the intensity of the casework cannot be maintained if it is intended that an increased number of prisoners are to be involved as whānau in the programme.

2. **The programme boundaries need to be explored and more resources included.**

There are three matters that need to be considered in relation to this. The first is the difficulty of having whānau client groups in the prison and the community simultaneously. The time needed to organise learning-based parenting, offer support to both caregivers and drive between locations means that a caseload of sixteen can never be achieved. In that environment, we were told that one whānau client equals two cases.

The second problem is the complexity of the needs when dealing with these families. The need to continually engage, win trust and confidence and avoid the pitfalls of complex, often gang-related lives, takes time and immense skill. When Hera told the evaluator that the best thing to ensure the success of the programme would be to clone Simone, she was not joking. Few are up to this task, although the Megan Ellis training provides some education-based options for upskilling staff.

In addition to time and space and intensity/ complexity, is the difficulty of working in the prison space. Hera, with Simone's support, pulled out of the co-visiting contract once Tane started falling back into his old patterns of power and control, then was able to re-design the FS intervention to take account of this. No doubt further changes will be needed. This does not mean that the project should give up on the kaupapa Māori goal of whanāungatanga.

3. **The programme is not fit for purpose for the prison environment**

We do not yet have a family friendly prison environment in New Zealand. It is acknowledged that the staff at OCF have bent over backwards to ensure the scheme fits within the secure boundaries of the prison operations.

Their willingness to negotiate entry for whānau for this scheme as a pilot programme is to be commended, and is down to the excellent relationship that Simone and prison staff have

built up over the years. As with many other aspects of this project, it has come down to trust.

However, the prison is far from fit-for-purpose for this kaupapa. The first and most important matter is the question of whānau space within the prison. The whare is heavily booked and, while a good space, offers limited time for the use of the FS programme. The current visiting area is built to maximise safety and security, at the cost of interaction. Prisoners are required to remain seated in their designated seat for the whole of the visit, and cannot engage in authentic play with their children.

But the visiting space is large and potentially could be rebuilt to allow for whānau development purposes as well as the Family Pathways model which is currently being explored by the prison. There is also plenty of possibility for developing an external space for play and activities, such as a fit-for-purpose courtyard for parent/child play. There are other models in NZ prisons that demonstrate such changes can be made without compromising security. Any new development might involve special whānau rooms, which would make it a first in NZ prisons, and open the way to a dedicated FS space.

An issue at present is that any expansion of the programme would run into severe space constraints in terms of the competing uses of the popular whare.

4. **The programme is not fit for purpose for the prison population**

The OCF staff are enthusiastic about the programme and about its possibilities for enhancing prisoner rehabilitation. The main concern from the prison perspective was that the age of the child heavily constrained those eligible to participate. One case manager said:

> I rate the programme two out of ten. This is because lots of our people do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the programme. There are so many people who are missing out.

And a manager stated: "It has been disappointing that the age of the child is so narrow. We would want to see a bigger age group".

To date, only a small number of cases have been successfully referred through from the prison. One case manager noted that, ideally, Simone would talk with the prisoners in groups about the programme and what Pillars has to offer. But with so few eligible whānau, such an initiative would be more likely to cause frustration than enable more referrals.

As a pilot, these constraints are acceptable and are tolerated by prison staff. They are not looking for the pilot to end, but to be expanded so that it is able to meet the needs of prisoners and their whānau.

5. **Parenting in the prison context**

The Pillars Family Start pilot raises some important issues about the goals of the prison system in relation to parenting. Many of the programmes currently in place follow a model

that the prisoner is largely immersed in the sentence until the last 2-3 months, then is brought into a process of reintegration that involves re-entry planning.

Although whānau visiting is allowed under prison rules, traditionally it is about keeping in contact rather than playing any active role in whānau life. The visiting facilities are not a part of the parenting pathway that has been adopted within OCF.

Generally speaking, and in terms of prisons overall, the confusion over roles also extends to the question of whether children have any place in the prison environment. One of the major findings of this evaluation is that the FS model, certainly as practiced within the kaupapa Māori framework, requires a level of prisoner/parent involvement that it is hard for the institution to sustain.

There possibly needs to be national policy guidelines in relation to UNCROC standards and also the Bill of Rights for the Children of Prisoners that clarify the extent to which prisoners will be supported to be active parents.

6. **Family Start a very good model for vulnerable prisoner whanau**

The advantage of the FS model is the focus on active engagement of prisoner parents. Most prisons have parenting programmes, and many are also involved in inside/outside models such as Storybook Dads. But none of these models involve direct engagement. Family Pathway Centres do, but are more focussed on those who can get to visit now and again.

The evaluation has shown that this is a complex and difficult kaupapa, and needs skilled FS workers, high institutional co-operation, a flexible approach, strong engagement and a focus on both manaakitanga and whanāungatanga.

Conclusions

Is the Pillars Family Start programme able to meet the need for a service to support whānau with a prisoner caregiver?

Yes, but the pilot has demonstrated some stresses and strains that arise from trying to fit into the model. In terms of the Megan Ellis engagement model and kaupapa Māori practices, the FS model is a good fit for engaging whānau due to the controlled environment, time-limited interactions and ability to bring the whānau together. The level of engagement with the most vulnerable is set correctly. But the context makes meeting those engagement goals very difficult and complex.

What are the features that are needed to make such a programme happen?

These features are described in the previous section. In the prison, good spaces, better access, more time for the FS worker to work in both community and prison space, a family-friendly environment.

But also, from the prison perspective, the service needs to be fit for purpose for the prisoner/ parents in there, so the age limits for whānau engagement need to be re-considered.

In the community, the programme is severely constrained in terms of referrals and workloads. All stakeholders are agreed that, if children of all ages were included, there would be the possibility of a much larger programme. The Pillars staff are reluctant to extend the agencies able to refer to the programme to the police and other specialist groups, for fear they will be swamped with cases within current resource limits.

What are the potential barriers to such a programme?

Space and time. As Megan Ellis's work has pointed out, our social service models are not well-equipped to deal with the massive barriers that emerge in dealing with the most vulnerable families, the 'hardly reached'. For a variety of reasons, and especially the engagement model being followed by the programme, and the high trust model personified in Simone's practice, Pillars Family Start has already built up a caseload of such whānau, and all of them are very engaged in the process.

Even where, for example in the case study of Tane and Hera, the prisoner parent puts a significant spoke in the wheel, work continues with the whānau in the hope of rebuilding the relationships. This is unique, as far as this evaluator knows.

But the programme is potentially expensive, with already 1.5 staff doing the caseload normally in Family Start achieved by 1. If the prison works to improve its child and family friendly face, then perhaps some of the load could be reduced on the case workers.

There are multiple barriers in these whānau. Issues such as drugs and alcohol abuse, gang involvement, violence, 'problem thinking' (issues such as jealousy, inadequacy, attitudes towards women), low or no parenting skills, very low trust in society and so on need to be

carefully and sensitively worked through and replaced over time with more positive and engaging daily lives. An evaluative model to map progress, understand setbacks and look to the longer term future should be put in place beside the Pillars programme, to provide significant data for an outcomes evaluation in the future.

Can the Dunedin programme be replicated in other centres?

The question of replicability is an important one. Stripped away from its nuances within the Dunedin project, can the Pillars Family Start plus programme be developed and maintained in other parts of the country?

1. **Location**

The programme would need to be located near enough to a prison and/or community corrections site to make fieldworker and community client / whānau travel practicable. Most prisons and community corrections centres are within 60 minutes of a main population centre. In the Southern region Christchurch prisons and Invercargill already have Pillars programmes. Pillars also has a large presence in South Auckland near the Wiri prisons.

Ngawha in Northland has whānau engagement programmes and would also be a good initial site. The prisons at Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Whanganui are located close to cities with relatively high-deprivation Māori populations and also significant gang involvement. In short, there are a number of centres where the prison location and the population profile would indicate strong need for this programme.

2. **Field team**

The field team anywhere would face the same issues as in Dunedin, which means essentially developing a relationship of professionalism and trust with key staff at each prison site or community corrections facility. Appointment of staff to positions needs to take into account the importance of such trust relationships with both the institutions and the whānau. If the scheme was rolled out in a number of centres, there would need to be some national and local leadership to ensure consistency and that the model of practice developed in Dunedin is replicated.

3. **The prison environment**

In developing the programmes in each prison, thought needs to be give to providing an appropriate whānau environment where the programme can operate. This may be a barrier in some places, or require some re-design of facilities. At the minimum, prisons will need to agree to support a space and resources needed for educative whānau visits and the opportunity for high quality interaction.

There would need to be some nationally agreed guidelines on how the programme operates, to avoid the tendency for prisons to require idiosyncratic rules and practices that prevent the programme operating effectively. The question of how each prison can be engaged to

support the project (in the absence of the kind of relationship that enabled Simone to engage OCF staff) would need to be carefully worked through.

4. The programme

The programme is easy to understand and replicable, as are the criteria for the selection and referral of prisoner/ parents to the programme. Work needs to be further developed on the community-based referral process from agencies such as the police.

The Megan Ellis based model appears to be effective using the principles of engagement, learning moments, long-term intervention and the kaupapa Māori principles of manaakitanga and whanāungatanga.

The question of the long-term effectiveness of the model cannot be known at this point. Significant work will be needed to even replicate the Dunedin model in other places: "clone Simone", as one mother said. Not that Simone is the only person who can do this work, but that a serendipitous mix of her prior relationships, knowledge of the Corrections system, professional adherence to (and personal characteristics of) an engagement model and her commitment to (and skills in) working with the hardest to reach whānau strongly drove the success of this project as a pilot.

One question that arises from the evaluation is how big is the potential client pool for the Pillars Family Start project. The FS workers interviewed for this project made it clear that the Pillars clientele was different from their own, and that they would not be able to work with that group due to a lack of resources and perhaps other reasons.

The Dunedin prison staff made it clear there were plenty of other prisoners with older children who need a similar programme, too. The Treasury estimate is that there were 61,000+ children aged 0-4 with a parent with a sentencing history in 2016. The figure is probably similar now. Not all of these by any means have the multiple issues and problems described in this report, but we may infer that 50% of them with have addiction and/ or mental health problems, most will live in benefit led families and perhaps 20% face the multiple vulnerabilities displayed by the whānau in this study, including gang involvement a major reluctance to be involved with any other agencies. A figure of 10,000 such whānau per year (with some repetition year on year) is therefore a reasonable estimate.

Pillars Family Start Plus model of practice

Stage of intervention	Intervention	Outcome	Usual FS
Eligibility	A parent is in prison or in justice system who has a child aged under 24 months.	Referral agency checks eligibility	No
Referral	Prison Case Manager, Probation Officer, and in future police and other agencies	Referral made to Pillars	No
Meeting with referred person	Pillars FS worker meets with person referred to discuss whānau contact	Case will/ will not proceed/ consent	Yes
Gaining consent	Pillars worker contacts caregiver of child aged 0-24 months to discuss engagement in the programme	Makes contact and gains consent / not.	Yes
Initial engagement	Initial interactions to gain trust and engagement	Both parties visited	No
Family Start plus	Work with whānau in community/ home environment	FS approach initiated	Yes
FS in prison	Pillars FS worker facilitates whānau visits in prison, preferably weekly or fortnightly	Where caregiver in prison	No
FS in community	Ongoing weekly visits in first three months, then reviewed. Issues include change in family circumstances (e.g. released from prison), issues faced by vulnerable families.	Developing skills, fostering longer-term engagement	Yes
Working with older children	Work towards mentoring matches for children in whānau aged 5+	All whānau to be involved	No
Longer term	Engagement of up to five years based on developmental work and whole whānau based relationship if possible.	Client is the young child/ baby	Yes