**Keeping in touch: how prisoners can maintain contact with family and significant others**

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| Telephone calls**Receiver** | It can be useful to remind new prisoners to share/ask for the following information in their first phone call:* Give family member their prisoner number
* Ask family member for contact names, numbers and date of birth of other individuals to put on their contact list
* Give them the contact name and number of the visit centre provider who can support them on their first visit.

Important to remember that families can become very anxious when they do not receive phone calls (a significant number of calls are made to the Safer Custody line because families have not received a phone call from a prisoner).Foreign nationals in custody are less likely to receive visits from family and significant others (due to family being abroad, lack of information, stigma or language barriers). Ensuring that foreign national prisoners have information about and access to a foreign national PIN is therefore essential. |
| Emails**Email a prisoner - the hassle free way to keep in touch** | This service enables families to send an email to someone in custody. The emails are printed out and delivered, along with other post on a daily basis. This can provide families with a much quicker way of staying in touch and is cheaper than sending a letter by post. Families are charged 35p an email. |
| Letters**Open envelope** | * While prisoners are waiting for their PIN to become available when they first arrive in custody they may want to make contact with their family and children via letter.
* Some prisoners may require support to write a letter – it may be helpful to provide a letter writing template for example: ‘first letter home’ or ‘child-friendly news’.
* Prisoners and families should be reminded that letters will be checked by the prison and families should be made aware of restricted content (such as certain photographs).
* Families will need to know a prisoner’s number and prison address to be able to send a letter.
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| VoicemailPrison Voicemail | * Prison Voicemail allows families to swap daily messages and is cheaper than calling a mobile.
* Families can call their Prison Voicemail number to leave a message or listen to a message that has been left for them.
* Families will be texted to let them know prisoners have left a message and it will also inform them if they move prison. The app lets families re-listen to messages and save favourites.
* Families will need to register with the service via phone or website and provide the prisoner’s number.
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| **Social visits****Table and chairs** | * It is important to notice whether a prisoner is receiving regular social visits or not.
* A large proportion of prisoners do not receive regular visits which can make it difficult for them to maintain relationships with their families during their sentence. This might be for a variety of reasons: distance from family, families’ needs (such as disability, ill-health, financial wellbeing, work or childcare commitments), relationship breakdown or simply not wanting their family to see them in custody.
* If a prisoner is not receiving regular visits it is important to understand the reasons why and identify whether the prisoner needs support to enable these visits.
* Ensure that both the prisoner and their family are aware of the Assisted Prison Visit Scheme that can provide financial assistance with travel costs for some families.
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| **Extended visits****Family with two children** | * Is the prisoner and their family aware of the various different types of extended visits that they might be eligible for such as family visits, homework clubs etc.?
* Is the prisoner aware of how to apply for extended visits?
* The prisoner may need further information or support to understand the nature and benefit of extended visits. For example, some prisoners may not feel comfortable with their children attending normal social visits but once they understand the nature of a family visit may feel more comfortable with them visiting.
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| **Storybook Dads/Mums** | * This service enables imprisoned parents to create a bedtime story CD, DVD or other educational gifts for their children. This service can help to maintain a relationship between a prisoner and their children as their children can continue to listen to their voice at home (for example, as a bedtime story).
* If Storybook Dads/Mums is available in your prison is the prisoner aware of the scheme and how to apply?
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| **Support and interventions for prisoners with no family ties****Handshake** | * A significant number of prisoners will not receive visits or maintain contact with anyone in the community. For some prisoners this may be because they do not have, or are unable to maintain, significant relationships with anyone on the outside.
* It is important that prisoners are made aware of the various support services or interventions that may help them to establish relationships or connect to the community.
* Establishments will have access to a number of initiatives or support services to enable those prisoners to develop relationships, these might include:
	+ **Official prison visitors** – volunteers from outside the prison who visit prisoners during social visits.
	+ **Penpal schemes.**
	+ **Peer support schemes** – for example, some establishments may have care leaver champions or peer support groups.
	+ **Mentors** – for example, some establishments have through-the-gate mentoring schemes available to support prisoners through resettlement and release.
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