

CHILDREN
VISITING
PRISONS

**CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS
SHARING GOOD PRACTICE**

WHAT IS

KIDS VIP?

KIDS VIP

works to enable relationships between children and their imprisoned parents to be sustained and developed.

Examples of materials suggested in the text can be found by contacting Kids VIP through their website - www.kidsvip.co.uk

KIDS VIP

Promotes good practice in prison play areas and provides training and support to prison play workers.

Raises awareness of prison staff of how imprisonment affects prisoners' children and the importance of families to prisons, especially for resettlement.

Works with prisons and voluntary sector agencies to provide better facilities for children in prison visits areas.

Encourages prisons to develop special visiting arrangements for children and families.

“I like to see my daddy and I like the play ladies”

Quote from a child aged 7

CONTENTS:

section 1
pages 5-22

CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS

section 2
pages 24-35

PRISON WELCOME & VISITOR CENTRES

section 3
pages 37-62

DOMESTIC VISITS & PLAY AREAS

section 4
pages 64-77

CHILD CENTERED VISITS

section 5
pages 79-84

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

section 1

CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS

CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS

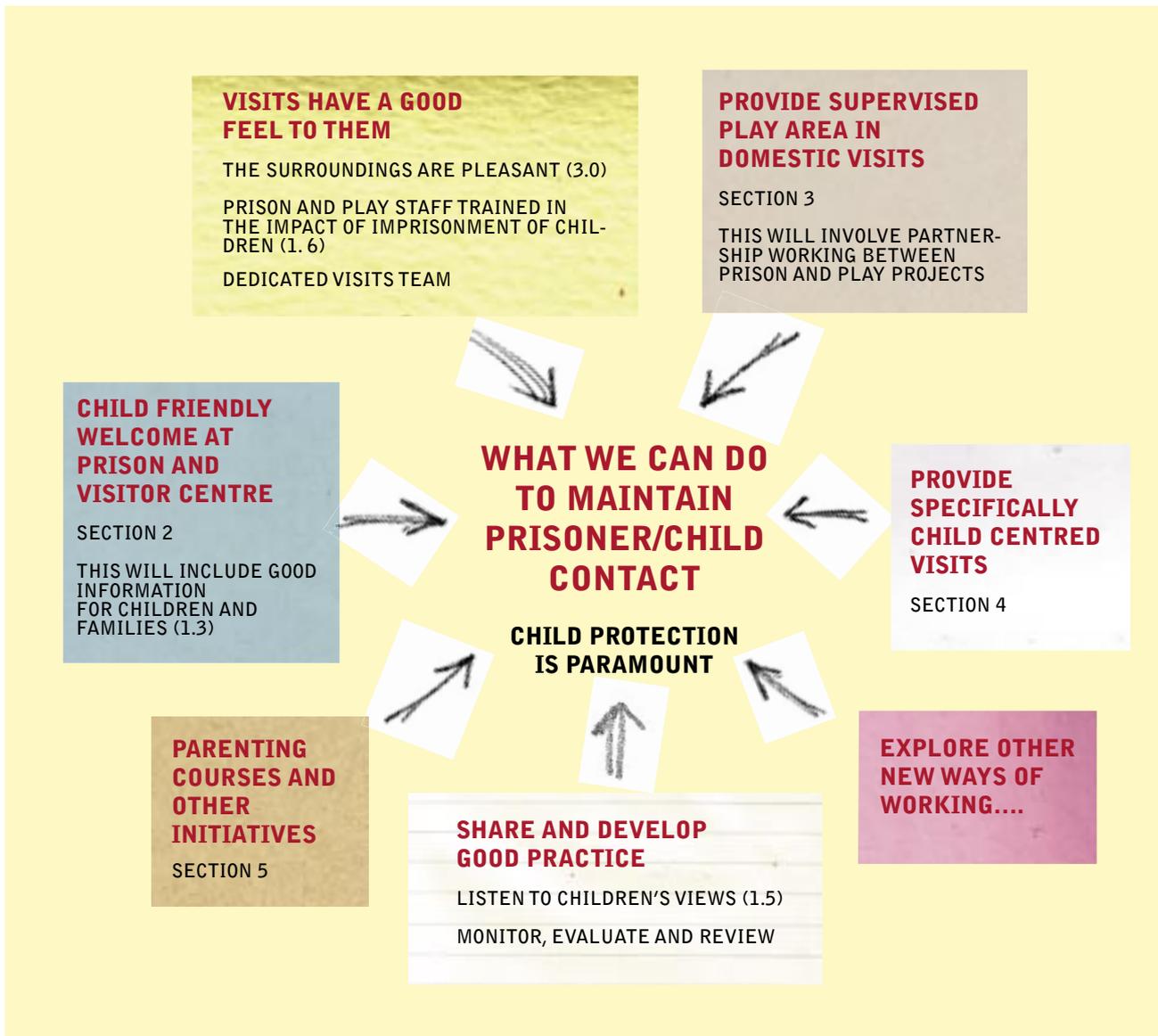
section 1:

CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS

Normal family life stops for many children when a parent is imprisoned.

This guide is to assist prisons in allowing children as much family normality as possible when they visit their imprisoned relatives. Giving prisoners opportunities to interact as family members is also a key need if they are to resettle successfully within the family and the community. Welcoming visitor centres, supervised play in visits and additional child centred visits are all ways of furthering this process. There are many more.

NOMS has recently developed new national minimum standards for services to visitors which will form the basis of all future contracts for provision of visitor centre services and have revised the Prison Service Instruction 'Providing Visits and Services to Visitors'. This revision of 'Children Visiting Prisons' will complement this work and offer invaluable guidance to all providers and prison staff.

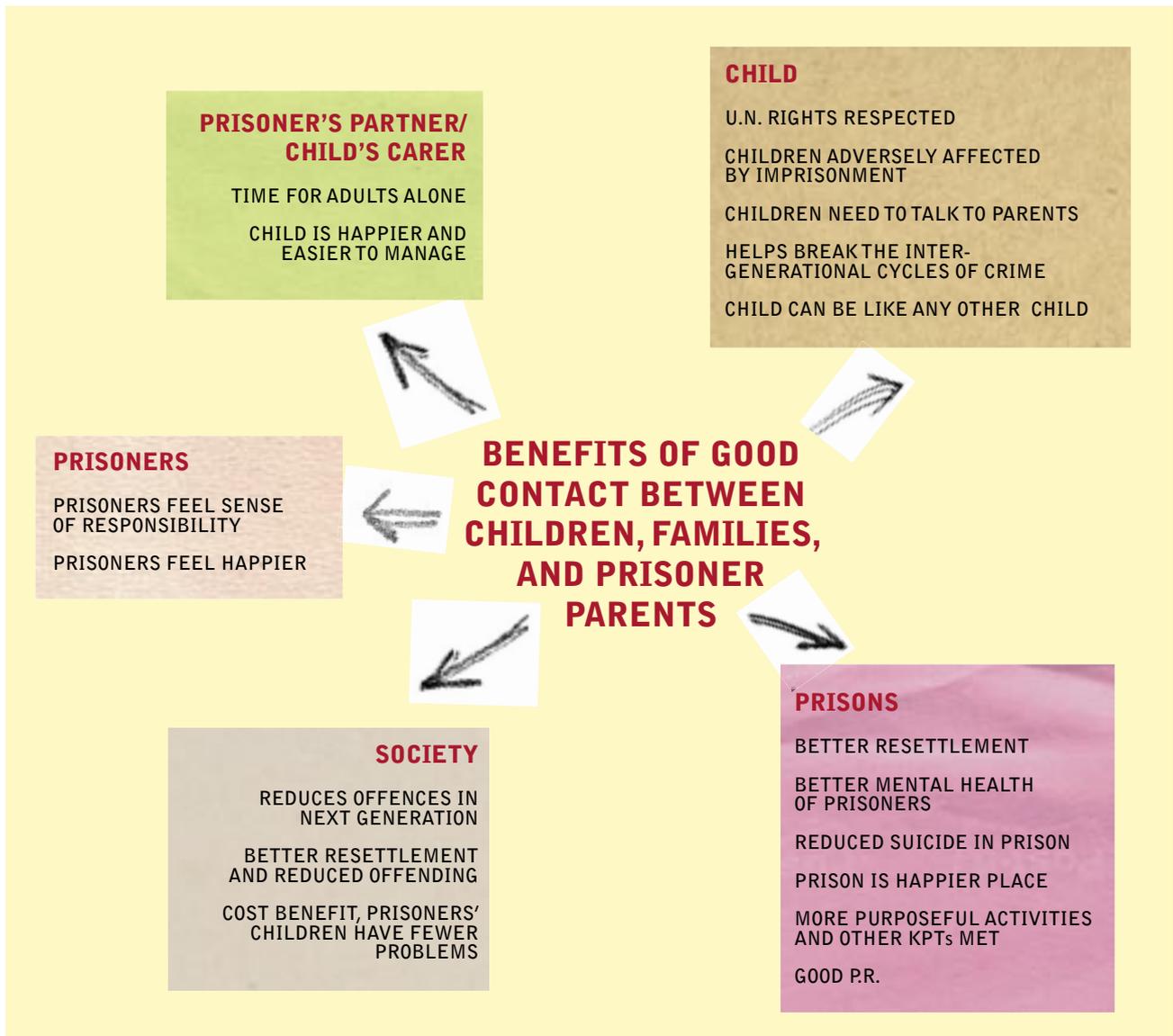


This guide aims to give in a user friendly format:

- The benefits of good visits and maintaining family ties to prisons and families.
- Examples of how some prisons have provided well for children.
- Guidance on how to replicate good practice in prisons and provide quality visits for children.
- Inspiration to develop more child and family friendly ways of working.
- This is not a formal set of standards; each chapter has a checklist at the

start so that establishments and play projects can ensure they consider what is relevant in each chapter to improve arrangements for children visiting.

- All pages are dated so that individual sections may be updated as necessary.
- Examples of practice in particular prisons are given, although they may not always be sustained. Please contact KIDS VIP for other examples should those mentioned in the text prove out of date.
- There are sections specifically relating to women prisoners at the end of chapters 1 and 4.



SECTION 1

This chapter looks in general at the issues surrounding children visiting prisons, and the need for child friendly visits.

1.1 Kids VIP and good practice.

1.2 The benefits to all of child friendly visits and family ties.

1.3 How imprisonment and visiting prison affects children.

- Emotional effects
- Social effects
- What the visit means for the child

1.4 The child's right to maintain contact with their parents and give their views on what is best for them.

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.5 What children need and say they want.

1.6 Ingredients for successful joint working for prison and play projects - understanding the partnership approach.

1.7. Other agencies involved in prison visits and quality controls on them.

1.8. Children of women prisoners.

CHECKLIST:

1.1 Prison has consulted Kids VIP for advice or training, as necessary.

1.2 Prison has considered how it can offer visits, which are child and family friendly.

1.4 All prison practices give children their rights.

1.5 Prison and play project have adopted ways of listening to children.

1.6 There is good communication between prison and play staff, who have a shared understanding of each others' functions, underpinned by:

- Regular meetings.
- Opportunities for prison to thank volunteers.
- Clear contractual agreements.
- Designated management and operational family support/link workers.
- Appropriate training is in place for prison staff.
- Play area staff trained and informed.

1.1 KIDS VIP AND GOOD PRACTICE

How did you feel when you first visited a prison? Probably you felt somewhat over-awed. Children visit prisons and all stages of this daunting process can be made as child friendly as possible within the security requirements of each prison. A positive attitude towards children throughout the prison and thinking of imaginative ways of reducing the intimidating aspects of prison for children, are even more important than resources.

How a child or the adults with them are treated at each stage of each visit affects how they feel about visiting and prison officers. It may even affect how they behave towards authority in general and is possibly part of the prevention of delinquency

Kids VIP as the specialist agency concerned with children visiting prisons, with a track record of working constructively with the prison service to improve visits for all and particularly for children visiting, has been asked by the prison service to create this guidance framework. Whilst it is not prescriptive in detail as good practice can take many forms, in principle the rule is that, taking into account all the other considerations including security, prisons should be made as child and family friendly for visitors as possible.

In addition to an input into prison officer recruit training, Kids VIP also offers on site training for visits teams and advice to prisons on visits. It also provides support and training for play coordinators (see 3.23). Kids VIP training and development staff are all PTTLs trained and have experience working with staff in prison establishments and prison play projects. All training is tailored to meet needs, and uses a variety of different methods, as appropriate. Please consult Kids VIP for assistance with improving visits.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY....

Some prison governors can provide good facilities for children, often through interdepartmental arrangements (such as providing resources jointly with Prison Education) within the limited flexibility their budget allows by allocating resources and using them effectively. Kids VIP works with individual prisons and the Prison Service to improve visits for children.

All prisons need a wish list, dreams and then plans for how to improve their visits. The creative process only starts with this guide - there are many more simple changes every prison should devise to improve visiting for children.

1.2 THE BENEFITS TO ALL OF CHILD FRIENDLY VISITS AND FAMILY TIES

These cannot be overestimated!

RESEARCH, NOMS AND BENEFITS TO PRISON OF MAINTAINING FAMILY TIES

Prisoners returning to a stable family home resettle better and are less likely to re-offend.

The Social Exclusion Report - Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners 2002), research found that for most offenders a number of complex issues i.e. drug and alcohol misuse, financial exclusion, temporary accommodation, homelessness, chaotic lifestyle, separation from children and families, domestic violence and abuse were contributing factors to their re-offending.

“Children and families” is now one of the nine NOMS pathways identified as factors which if addressed can contribute to the overall Prison Service aim of Reducing Re-offending. There is NOMS recognition that offenders’ families can be affected by the offender’s behaviour, and punishment, but can also be a source of support and stability. Reducing re-offending: supporting families,

creating better futures-A Framework for improving the local delivery of support for the families of offenders, (MoJ and DCSF 2009) is a comprehensive document and includes references to relevant research. It is however guidance and not mandatory. Other up to date research relevant to this chapter can be found on the Action for Prisoners Families website www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

GOOD VISITS CONTRIBUTE TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AND REDUCED SUICIDES IN CUSTODY

Good family visits boost the prisoner’s morale.

FAMILIES CAN GIVE INTELLIGENCE TO PRISONS

About possible self-harm, drugs etc, especially if relationships between officers and visitors are good. Families are also more likely to persuade prisoners to talk to officers, if they themselves feel they can talk to officers.

GOOD VISITS MEAN BETTER ORDER IN THE PRISON

Good visits encourage improved behaviour by prisoners. Visits always have high priority in prisoner surveys.

FEEL GOOD FACTOR

Improving visits generally makes them more pleasant for everybody. Play areas in visits make visits easier for staff and prisoners with or without children, because children are less likely to run around disturbing the visit, and they provide a cheerful focus in visits.

PRISON SERVICE REQUIREMENTS AFFECT VISITS

Prison Rules require prisons to actively encourage prisoners to maintain outside contacts and meaningful family ties which is integral to their rehabilitation. Visits are seen as crucial to sustaining relationships with close relatives, partners and friends and help prisoners maintain links with the

community. The MOJ Resettlement Survey 2008 showed that offenders could be 39% less likely to re-offend if they had received family visits whilst in custody. Regular and good quality contact time between an offending parent and their children/ partner provides an incentive to stay out of the penal system, ensures there is accommodation to return to on release from prison and assists the process of securing future employment/training.

Most aspects of visits are now covered by the PSI Providing Visits and Services to Visitors introduced in 2011, which includes recommendations on visitors centres, information to prisoners, booking systems, travel to prisons etc. All this guide should be read with reference to this PSI.

PRISON VISITS ARE KEY TO GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS

Better visits lead to better relationships with the community. Prison visits are the one area of the prison seen by the public at visits: if visits are good they will counteract some of the bad press prisons unfortunately receive. If they are bad, they may unfairly reinforce negative impressions of the prison service, despite the positive activities, which may be taking place within the prison.

Visits are an opportunity to demonstrate the difficult job prison officers do well in balancing security with humanity.

PRISON COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Visits may provide an opportunity for developing a prison community spirit e.g. when different areas of the prison, possibly education, the kitchen and the gym, can get involved in preparing for special children's visits, or prisoners in education can create artistic murals for the visits room.

GOOD VISITS ARE PART OF THE PRISON SERVICE DECENCY AND DIVERSITY AGENDA

Providing for different prisoners, their families and children, forms part of the prison

service commitment to valuing diversity and equality of opportunity. All visitors are entitled to expect good visits.

BENEFITS TO CHILDREN OF IMPROVING VISITS

- Children need child friendly treatment and provision.
- Children need to feel they are valued and not treated as criminals too. This is a matter of common decency.
- Children may suffer from being separated from their parents by imprisonment; have health, emotional and behavioural problems, which may include offending. Some of these problems may persist, leading to a need for costly interventions in childhood and even adulthood. There is thus a likely cost benefit to assisting during a parent's imprisonment.
- May break the cycle of recidivism

1.3 CHILDREN - HOW IMPRISONMENT AND VISITING PRISON AFFECTS THEM

Kids VIP have found that where prison staff understand the issues for children visiting prisons, and consider what they would want for children known to them should they have to visit a prison, they find it much easier and are far more likely to create a child friendly environment.

Children and young people are affected by the imprisonment of a parent or relative in many ways, and this is highlighted in recent written research and visual material. Although the stresses of imprisonment may change during the process, arrest, remand, court appearance, sentence, pre-release, and even home visits, to resettlement, whether the prisoner returns home or not, the children feel its effects throughout and often long beyond. A parent who was pre-

viously there no longer is, but children do not receive the customary sympathy following other loss or bereavement, but rather feel stigmatised, and are left uncertain as to who, if anyone might listen sympathetically to them. There are other effects too, financial, emotional and social. An estimated 150,000 or 7% of the school population have been affected by the imprisonment of a parent in England and Wales. The Social Exclusion Report (2002) suggested that in addition 33% of young offenders and 61% of women prisoners are parents. The numbers of children affected by their parents' imprisonment are not routinely collected, nor do they automatically receive any special help. These children are also victims. *Contact KIDS VIP for examples of videos and books highlighting these issues.*

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

FEAR

Children are frightened when their parents are taken away, particularly at night, and often they confuse prison officers with the police who arrested their parents. They are frightened about the future and what will happen to them and their parents.

ANGER

Children may feel anger at police, the prison and their parents for committing the crime. Some will become angry at the world in general.

LOSS

For a child whose parent has gone to prison the loss may be like bereavement. Physically the parent is not there to do all the things they did with them before, such as watching or playing football together, telling them off, hugging them or whatever else they did at home. They may exhibit regressive behaviour – bed-wetting, temper tantrums, have problems at school, become withdrawn etc.

SHAME

Depending on the type of crime, the reactions from the wider family may be to dissociate themselves from the family, and the wider community too may shun them, particularly when the crime was of a sexual nature. Children are faced with considering who they feel it is safe to tell about the imprisonment. A child who knew where her mother was told her classmates she was working abroad. This sort of deception adds further burdens to the child.

CONFUSION

Some research shows that a third of children are told the truth, a third are lied to, and a third are told nothing about where their parent is as they are told what their mother/carer can deal with. Often at the start the carer is too shocked himself or herself to be able to tell the child calmly, and as time goes on it may become increasingly difficult. Many will have the experience of learning the truth in the playground.

What a child imagines may be worse than the truth. Children from a surprisingly young age know that they are visiting a prison, but go along with the pretence that they are visiting a hospital, or workplace, because they want to protect their carers and parents and not cause further stress.

FOR THEIR MENTAL WELL-BEING AND TO RETAIN THEIR TRUST IN THEIR PARENTS, CHILDREN HAVE A NEED FOR CORRECT INFORMATION.

There are many good booklets which give useful information for parents and carers about how to tell their children.

Contact Kids VIP for current examples

(1.3) LOW SELF-ESTEEM

All these emotions taken together contribute to a child feeling, “*I am worthless; my Dad/Mum is a criminal*”. They may also receive less attention at home because of the pressures the rest of the family is coping with. Consequently many have very low expectations of facilities at prison visits and may be aggressive partly because they are so used to feeling they are ‘at the bottom of the heap’.

RELIEF

Children may feel relief that their mum or dad is in prison particularly if they were persistent drinkers, drug users or were violent. Children may also feel safer if the prisoner was violent towards their partner. Children may feel glad that the parent is safe in prison, though less often than we might imagine. Research suggests that children feel more relief when it is an older sibling who is imprisoned, whom they feel has been receiving care and attention, which can now revert to them.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

STIGMA

Neighbours and others often do link the family to the crime, sometimes to the extent that other children are told not to play with prisoners’ children. The stigma may also extend to their school life.

BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

As one researcher found: *Children found it difficult to talk about their emotions openly*. There is trouble at home, the parent is unused to disciplining, becomes upset and the child reacts. In other cases the child is expected to take over the role previously fulfilled by the absent parent. In extreme cases the stresses of coping on their own will be so great for the carer that the children end up going into care. Previously well-behaved children may start bullying, and the stigma of their parents’ imprison-

ment may cause others to bully them. They may have trouble with their peers at school. Some recent research from Cambridge suggests that boys with parents in prison are more likely to exhibit higher levels of delinquent/antisocial behaviour continuing into adult life. The researchers studied controlled other risk factors for delinquency, and compared parental imprisonment with other reasons for separation or no separation.

SCHOOL

It is difficult for prisoners’ families to know whether to tell the school about the imprisonment. They may be met with additional stigma, or the school may be sympathetic. Some work has been done raising the awareness amongst schools of the needs of children affected by imprisonment, but much more remains to be done.

In any event the carer may rightly think that prison visits are more important than school at that time in the child’s life, and the child may miss school regularly to visit. Many children will experience lack of concentration. This often results in homework not being done or grades falling. Especially in the remand phase, when children do not know when or if their parent is coming home again, it is hard to focus on schoolwork when there are other major issues affecting the stability of their lives.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

Especially at the start of the sentence families may find difficulties paying the rent or mortgage. Sometimes they may lose the home, and coupled with the loss of support from family and friends, and a lower income, the children will be unable to keep up with their peers, particularly in buying clothes or having money for outings. Prisoners too may be unaware of the financial pressures and demand expensive trainers, and even costly drugs to be brought in. Some visitors are eligible for the Assisted Prison Visits scheme, which provides financial assistance to visitors who are on a low income or in receipt of benefit. *See Prison Service website for details of APVU.*

HOUSING ISSUES

A prisoner's family may have to move because they can no longer afford to pay the mortgage, or the house is not registered in their name. They may also need to move house as a result of stigma, or even attacks, depending on the nature of the crime.

ISOLATION

Many prisoners' children experience isolation; sometimes a child may feel that he or she is the only child with a family in this position and be unable to talk to others outside the family. This is further exacerbated if the family is rehoused as a result of the imprisonment, where they have no other family near and understandably do not have the confidence to develop new networks for themselves.

HEALTH

Prisoners' families do have more health problems than others in the community. This is partly because of the increased stress leading to mental health problems. The uncertainty following arrest, during remand, lack of income and lack of support all contribute to poor physical and mental health. Statistically more prisoners' families also have underlying mental health problems. For some children, separation at a very young age from their primary carer, may result in separation and attachment disorders, which affect them throughout their lives. *This is particularly true for children of women prisoners, see 1.8*

WHAT DOES A VISIT MEAN FOR A CHILD?

LOST SCHOOLING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Visit times may not take account of children's schooling and they may have to leave school regularly each week, either telling a lie about yet another visit to the dentist, or saying nothing and being marked as a truant. Generally teachers may not understand the issues facing prisoners' children.

LONG JOURNEYS

In 2003, male prisoners were held in prisons an average of 50 miles from home, but many are held far further away. For the family travelling this may mean journeys on public transport of 2-3 hours in each direction. If they are on a low income, the carer will have no spare cash for food or drinks. Even with assistance from the APVU (Assisted Prison Visits Unit) prisoners' families have to travel the cheapest way e.g. visitors to prisons on the Isle of Wight have to go by boat rather than hovercraft. Others may have to travel to rural locations and walk at least a mile –possibly in the rain with a buggy and a toddler. Some children may be tired and irritable by the time they arrive at prison visits.

WAITING

Because prisons make it such a strict requirement to be on time and transport can be difficult, families may arrive early and have to wait. At this point the visitor centre can provide a haven where families can recover. Where there is no visitor centre families may wait either outside, or in the prison waiting room.

Even where there is a visitor centre, sometimes the processing of large numbers of visitors still means that they spend what seem like very long periods in basic waiting rooms.



VISITS?



NO PROBLEM!



(1.3) INTIMIDATING ENVIRONMENT

A child's perception of the official security-conscious environment may be that it is overwhelming and frightening. Posters are usually black and white and tell of the penalties for visitors who themselves offend. There is often a lot of harsh noise of doors clanging and shouting etc. The setup may be geared for robust adults who are used to it but for some children it is difficult.

NEED FOR CHILD FRIENDLY INFORMATION

Children want to know what the prison is like, what they can expect, and if they know their parent is in prison, what it is like for them. Their fears are often much worse than the reality. Some prisons have prepared useful booklets, or posters to assist children with understanding the process.

Contact Kids VIP for current relevant examples.

APPREHENSION AT START OF THE VISITS

Before they see their prisoner relative children are often very worried about how the prisoner will be. Children may have seen alarming television programmes, and prisoners themselves often tell exaggeratedly bad stories about prison life. Children may be anxious about what they will say to their parent (they may have been told not to say things by other family members too), and how their parent will behave towards them particularly if the prisoner was the disciplinarian at home.

PARENTS NEED TIME TO TALK ALONE

The prison visit is often the only occasion for the family to have time 'as a normal family'. Adults in the family need to sort out all areas of their lives without the children listening, knowing the children are safe and stimulated. The children, of all ages, need to have somewhere to go so that they do not have to listen to these conversations.

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENT

The child needs time to be with their parent. It is their only time to experience family life with that parent.

PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OR BOREDOM

As in hospital visits the child needs something to do, particularly if they have come on a normal visit with the parent or other adult relative. When there is no supervised play area children will often run around the visits room annoying officers and other visitors.

NEED TO LEAVE

As anyone who has been in a visits room will know, the end of the visit can be very difficult for both child and adult visitors. They have seen the prisoner but are left again to face their lives without them, and often a difficult journey home too.

ANYTHING WE, PRISONS, VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY ORGANISATIONS, THE COMMUNITY AND PARENTS AND CARERS CAN DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING CONTACT WITH A PRISONER RELATIVE EASIER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WELLBEING AND MAY REDUCE THE RISK OF THEIR OFFENDING LATER IN LIFE.

1.4 THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THEIR PARENTS AND GIVE THEIR VIEWS

Some people feel that whatever efforts are made prisons are not appropriate environments for children to visit. However, children do have a right to visits, arising out of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 as enshrined in the Children's Act 1989. These rights can be seen as promises that the government will ensure certain things are in place. The whole spirit of the convention and many other clauses may also impact indirectly on children affected by imprisonment.

Probably the most important rights for children visiting prison are the following articles, which underpin the children's rights to some aspects of family life and to be able to be involved in choices affecting them:

ARTICLE 2

protects children from being discriminated against or punished because of their parents'/families' status or activities.

ARTICLE 3

requires that everything, which affects children, reflects what is in the child's best interests.

ARTICLE 5

respects the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents to provide appropriate direction and guidance for their children.

ARTICLE 9

safeguards the rights of a child separated from their parents to maintain contact with their parents provided it is in the child's best interests.

ARTICLE 12

states the right of the child to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

The full text of the articles of the UN convention can be found at [www.http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)

These principles govern the spirit of this guide and all work for children visiting prison and in the community.

WEBSITE

WWW.UNICEF.ORG/CRC/CRC.HTM FOR MORE INFORMATION

The children's commissioner's mission is to "use our powers and independence to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely asked for, listened to and that outcomes for children improve over time. We will do this in partnership with others, by bringing children and young people into the heart of the decision-making process to increase understanding of their best interests." The Scottish Children and young People's Commissioner produced "Not Seen Not Heard Not Guilty-The rights and status of children of prisoners in Scotland" Feb 2008.

The clear intent is that prisoners' children should have the same opportunities as other children. As a society we need to ensure this is so.

Voluntary sector agencies such as Action for Prisoners' Families are working to raise awareness at government level and amongst professionals of the specific needs of children affected by imprisonment and to secure relevant support for them.

1.5 WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED AND SAY THEY WANT

Also underpinning this document are children's needs and what they say they need. Studies consulting children and families are included in the lists of research mentioned at the start of section 1.2. pact have produced a toolkit for "Listening to Prisoners' children".

KEY POINTS ABOUT CONTACT WITH A PARENT IN PRISON - CHILDREN CONSULTED

(From Gill Pugh, Sentenced Families, Ormiston Children and Families Trust-2004 at 8.7)

- The financial strains of visiting deterred families more than simply distance from home.
- Children generally found ordinary domestic visits distressing, intimidating and boring.
- Children were particularly frightened by search procedures, but the attitude of prison staff could make a big difference.
- Good play facilities in Visitor Centres and Visits Rooms greatly enhanced the quality of visits for children and parents.
- Extended visits (i.e. Children's Visits and similar) enable children to be the focus of attention and promote bonding between imprisoned parents and their children.

- Young people wanted better provision for their age group on Children's Visits.
- Families of young offenders wanted Children's Visits too.
- Early opportunities for private visits for parents of new babies were highly valued.
- Lack of privacy during visits was an issue - especially between imprisoned parents and young people.
- Letters could provide opportunities for improved communication of difficult issues between partners.
- Regular telephone calls were a useful tool for some in strengthening family relationships, but limited time and access created a source of frustration for many. These needs defined in consultation with children form the basis of the requirements set out in this guide.

Play coordinators who consult with children on a daily basis contributed to the consultation in preparing this document.

Contact Kids VIP for other examples of evaluation tools for use by children.

1.6 INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOINT WORKING FOR PRISON AND PLAY PROJECTS - UNDERSTANDING THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

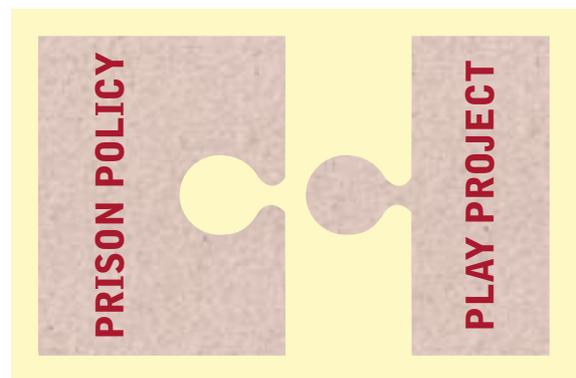
As shown above children need specialist child provision in visits. Whether play providers are from voluntary organisations or employed direct by the prison, (*see chapter on domestic visits*), their agenda will be different from that of the prison. CLINKS, a national membership body that supports the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the Criminal Justice system, provides some general information and good practice guidelines on working between prisons and the voluntary sector, which are available in the publications section of their website (www.clinks.org).

WEBSITE

ON GOOD PRACTICE
VISIT WWW.CLINKS.ORG

THERE ARE VARIOUS UNDERPINNING REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOINT PROVISION OF VISITS FOR CHILDREN:

- Prison and the play provider need to have a shared understanding of their different roles and how together they can provide good quality visits for children:
- Clear respectful communication between prison and play projects is very important.
- Clear agreed policy specification as to what is required, and the commitment from the prison and the play provider, e.g. through heads of agreement, or service level agreements. This may be governed by the NOMS arrangements for voluntary sector involvement. See supporting materials.
- Emphasise strong line management.
- A designated member of the senior management team to act as the contact point.
- A prison "link" officer needs to be appointed as the identified individual to maintain day-to-day links with the play provider. They may be located in operations, resettlement or residential staff. The role will vary but both the link officer and others need to know that they have been identified and the role should be discussed and included in the officers' appraisal etc.
- Use the designated voluntary sector coordinator (every prison has one) or consider appointing a family liaison or support officer to encourage and re-establish links between prisoners and their families. The benefits of family contact officers are discussed in -Keeping in Touch: the case for family support work in prison (Nancy Loucks PRT 2005). Many prisoners lose contact with their families when they go to prison.
- Established quarterly meetings of representatives of play providers with the prison management and appointed link person. Prison to take responsibility for taking and distributing minutes. (Some play providers have travelled to scheduled meetings to find no prison personnel present.)
- Shared understanding and language. See reference to list on prison jargon and categories of prison in supporting material.
- Prison to provide continuity of staff within visits area ideally with a dedicated visits team who can get to know the visitors, the procedures and take a pride in offering high quality visits.
- Need for prison to thank volunteers who give their time.
- Mailbox for play project. (Often play providers are not included in prison mailings or letters sent to them at the prison never reach them.)
- Play coordinator needs to introduce her/him self to develop rapport with new staff including governor as they are appointed and stress the value of good visits to prison.
- Play project policies to dovetail into prison policies. They may have joint policies even though the procedures may be different.



TRAINING IS NEEDED FOR ALL

Everyone involved with prisoners' children needs first to understand how imprisonment could have affected them, and then to realise how their own behaviour will impact on children visiting, and finally how they can develop their behaviour to make visits easier for children. Both prison and play staff need to understand how to safeguard children from harm. Please contact Kids VIP for details of training available.

ESSENTIAL TRAINING

PRISON SERVICE STAFF

AT INDUCTION: (for recruit officers-POELTS)

- Impact of imprisonment-how it affects children.
- Importance of families to prisons (resettlement, good order, good P.R. etc.)
- Examples of good practice both projects and direct working styles.
- Safeguarding children in the prison environment.

FOR ALL PRISON STAFF WORKING IN VISITS:

- Ideally an NVQ on custody care.
- Role and perspective of play provider.
- First aid.
- Safeguarding children in the prison environment.

MANAGEMENT:

Understanding of the value of families to them – how they can work effectively in partnership with external voluntary agencies and value them.

- Safeguarding children in the prison environment.

PLAY PROJECTS

AT INDUCTION:

Understanding the prison environment: Prison keys, prison impacts on the play area, what play staff can take into prison.

- Mandatory training for volunteers on: health and safety, security.
- Impact of imprisonment-how it affects children
- Issues related to play.
- How to offer a better visit to older children.
- Safeguarding children in the prison environment.

ACCREDITED TRAINING

Kids VIP is accrediting the following 5 day programme training with Skills for Justice, covering 5 key topics necessary to support children of prisoners through prison visits and sentence planning:

- Day 1: Impact of Parental Imprisonment on Children.
- Day 2: Safeguarding Children in the Prison Environment.
- Day 3: The Importance of Play.
- Day 4: The Role and Qualities of a Play Worker.
- Day 5: How to Run a Family Day.

1.7. OTHER AGENCIES INVOLVED IN PRISON VISITS AND QUALITY CONTROLS ON THEM

Apart from direct prison management there are other agencies, which also may have an impact on prisons, and visits.

NOMS - NATIONAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT SERVICE

NOMS is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, bringing together the headquarters of the Probation Service and HM Prison Service to enable more effective delivery of services. The two bodies remain distinct but have a strong unity of purpose – to protect the public and reduce reoffending. Prison and probation services ensure the sentences of the courts are properly carried out and work with offenders to tackle the causes of their offending behaviour.

NOMS is responsible for commissioning and delivering adult offender management services, in custody and in the community, in England and Wales. It manages a mixed economy of providers. Decisions on what work is to be done and who it will be done by are based on evidence and driven by best value.

NOMS keeps the public safe by ensuring that around 260,000 offenders each year safely and securely undertake the punishment of the courts through custodial (prison) or community sentences provided through the prison and probation services. As a result, we work with a wide range of partners to deliver programmes and interventions designed to reduce reoffending.

There are currently 137 prisons in England and Wales, 126 of these are run by the public sector through Her Majesty's Prison Service and 11 are operated by private sector partners.

Probation services are provided by 35 Probation Trusts across England and Wales. All of the above receive funding from NOMS to which they are accountable for their performance and delivery.

The CLINKS website can help with understanding NOMS

WEBSITE

WWW.CLINKS.ORG

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES (HMIP)

HMIP is an independent inspectorate, which reports on conditions for and treatment of those in prison, young offender institutions and immigration removal centres.

Its aims are :

To ensure independent inspection of places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.

VALUES

The work of HM Inspectorate of Prisons is informed by five value statements that:

- independence, impartiality and integrity are the foundations of our work
- the experience of the detainee is at the heart of inspections
- respect for human rights underpins our expectations
- we embrace diversity and are committed to pursuing equality of outcomes for all
- we believe in the capacity of both individuals and organisations to change and improve, and that we have a part to play in initiating and encouraging change.

The inspectorate concept of a healthy prison looks at safety, respect, purposeful activity resettlement, all of which as we have seen above are affected by the quality of visits.

The inspectorate produces a series of expectations. The detailed examination of prison life against the expectations form the basis for the inspection reports and their conclusions and recommendations. The expectations concerning visits include references to staff attitudes, timing of visits, provision for children and family visits.

The most recent inspection report for an individual establishment will indicate what recommendations the inspectorate have made.

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARDS (IMB)

Every prison and young offenders' institution in England and Wales must have an Independent Monitoring Board, whose members are appointed by the Home Secretary. All boards are totally independent and each one is responsible for a particular institution. Together they act as an independent watchdog and safeguard the wellbeing and rights of all prisoners. If contacted, the IMB in a particular prison may also be useful in promoting improvements to visits.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman investigates complaints from prisoners, those on probation and those held in immigration removal centres. Details of the services provided are available on the PPO website.

WEBSITES

WWW.JUSTICE.GOV.UK/ABOUT/NOMS.HTM

WWW.JUSTICE.GOV.UK/INSPECTORATES/HMI-PRISONS

WWW.IMB.GOV.UK

WWW.PPO.GOV.UK

1.8. CHILDREN OF WOMEN PRISONERS

Visits to women are particularly important because they are often the primary care givers for their children prior to imprisonment. More women try to maintain their parental responsibilities from prison and the powerlessness and worry about their children compounds the difficulties of prison life for them. Their children are likely to suffer even more socially or emotionally and may be put in care. It is likely that only around 300, out of the estimated 6,000 children with mothers in prison, remain in their own home once their mother has been sentenced. They often feel extremely isolated and desperately concerned for their mother; in addition many become caregivers to younger children themselves. This stress and disruption in their lives, and breaking the maternal bonds means they are three times more likely than other children to suffer serious mental health problems which often persist into adult life. For this reason child focused child visits are particularly important in women's prisons as they will visit less often, and be escorted by social services.

All matters relating to women prisoners are covered by Prison Service Order (4800) on Women Prisoners which covers all areas of regime provision in the care and management of women prisoners and planning for their resettlement.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Examples of materials suggested in the text can be found by contacting Kids VIP through their website - www.kidsvip.co.uk

section 2

PRISON WELCOME & VISITOR CENTRES

section 2:

PRISON WELCOME AND VISITOR CENTRES

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT HOW VISITORS AND CHILDREN IN PARTICULAR NEED TO BE TREATED WELL PRIOR TO THE VISITS, BOTH AT THE PRISON AND IN PRISON VISITOR CENTRES

THE VISITOR CENTRE MAY PROVIDE THE ONE SITUATION WHERE VISITORS CAN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND PROBLEMS AS PRISONERS' FAMILIES

PRISON WELCOME:

- 2.1 The welcome children receive from the prison should ensure:
- 2.2 Positive attitude towards children and other visitors
- 2.3 Correct information is offered to visitors as soon as possible after prisoner arrives at the prison
- 2.4 It is easy to book visits
- 2.5 Visitors are made aware of how to book in, identification required, and how many children can visit
- 2.6 Access, timing of visits is child friendly
- 2.7 Travel to the prison is as easy as possible
- 2.8 There is a visitor centre
- 2.9 Reception at the gate is welcoming and child friendly
- 2.10 Searching of children is explained and child friendly

VISITOR CENTRES

2.11 Ideally all prisons should have a visitor centre which provides well for families:

2.12 The visitor centre is a good place to be

2.13 The visitor centre is welcoming to children

2.14 Visitor centre staff are clear about their role in relation to children

2.15 All staff are appropriately trained to work with children

2.16 Visitor centre provides all useful information in an accessible user friendly way

2.17 The visitor centre has appropriate facilities for visiting children

2.18 The visitor centre has considered how best to assist visitor families affected by drugs

2.19 The visitor centre has considered, adopted and reviews appropriate policies and procedures including those to safeguard children from harm

2.20 The visitor centre monitors, evaluates and reviews its work

2.21 The visitor centre has considered opening the centre at other times and using it for other activities

2.1 THE WELCOME CHILDREN RECEIVE FROM THE PRISON

ALL visits need to be child and family friendly from the first contact with the prison throughout the process. There are a number of things that can be considered

to ensure a good welcome to all visitors, including children, some of which are considered below. Most aspects of visits are now covered by the PS I *Providing Visits and Services to Visitors* introduced in 2011, which includes recommendations on visitors centres, information to prisoners, booking systems, travel to prisons etc.

All this chapter should be read with reference to this PSI

2.2 POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN AND OTHER VISITORS

who have committed no crimes but are also victims of the prisoner's offence.

Training for all prison personnel who have contact with visitors: booking clerks, receptionists, gate staff, OSGs (officer support grade staff) drug dog staff, searching and visits staff etc, on the impact of imprisonment, the benefits to the prison of good family ties, diversity and how the different cultural and special needs of both child and adult visitors can be met. Those involved in searching will also need training in how to search children sensitively.

2.3 CORRECT INFORMATION REQUIRED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER PRISONER ARRIVES AT PRISON

Ideally a leaflet and a stamped envelope would be made available to the prisoner on induction. Helpful information to include is:

- A description of the visits process, from booking to the end of the visit
- How a visiting order looks

- Travel directions, local transport times and parking arrangements
- Arrival at the prison
- Identification required
- Searching process
- The visit itself including the facilities available
- Information about when the play area will be open
- Suggestions on how to help children deal with visits
- A description of specific facilities available for children and young people, and babies' nappies, bottles and buggies
- Information on what will have to go in lockers, such as special toys
- Any information the prison needs about the number of children visiting. This may be important where facilities are limited
- Explanation of the paramount need for security and the consequences of bringing drugs in
- How the prison will cater for those with special needs
- A request for visitors to identify their or their children's special needs to play area and search staff
- That parents have responsibility for their children at all times. Even when there are supervised play areas, this is not a crèche facility

- In cases where children are used to smuggle drugs, child protection measures may be invoked *See ADFAM website for useful information and publications*
- 2.18 below.

Prison service leaflets included in Providing Visits and Services to Visitors PSI can be adapted for individual prisons e.g. Leaflet advising visitors to wear warm clothes because it is a long walk to the prison. Prison websites now give much clear information about visiting which can be helpful.

Child friendly information for different age groups should also be available. This has already been discussed at *1.2 Confusion*

2.4.EASY BOOKING

Booking lines need to be accessible and open at times when visitors can book (i.e. at least at some lunch hours, and/or some evenings). Some prisons now operate an email booking system which makes them booking easier for those with email access.

2.5.SMOOTH BOOKING IN, IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED AND HOW MANY CHILDREN MAY VISIT.

All aspects of booking, identification, and how many children can visit are detailed in Providing Visits and Services to Visitors PSI. In particular it specifies: 3.7 If fixed seating is in place, freestanding chairs should be made available for additional children. These should be arranged in such a way as not to impede surveillance of the visit, or general access by prison staff, or jeopardise the welfare of the child.

2.6 ACCESS, TIMING OF VISITS IS SUITABLE FOR VISITORS

The first consideration is whether the visit time takes account of the needs of all children, families and young people visiting. Given the pressure on families to make visits and the difficulties for them, prisons have considered longer visits less often, and in particular where travel is not too arduous, evening visits for school children. All decisions about visits need also to meet the requirements of the prison regime. Visitors should be surveyed from time to time to check the best visiting times for them.

Various prisons offer visits at convenient times for families, including 'twilight' visits: Visits 1.30 - 8.00pm, or evening visits

2.7 TRAVEL TO THE PRISON IS AS EASY AS POSSIBLE

Although this is outside the scope of the handbook, undoubtedly the location of prisons, and the imprisonment of some prisoners far from home (on average at least 50 miles from home) makes visiting more difficult. Anything prisons can do, either by dovetailing visits with transport, or laying on transport from a local station etc. to alleviate the journey for visitors, will improve visits. Information should include good advice on local travel, parking at the prison and the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, (APVU) which provides financial assistance with the cost of visits for visitors on low incomes. The easier the transport the easier the visit.

Please also see the PS Providing Visits and Services to Visitors introduced in 2011 and individual prison's website information.

2.8 VISITOR CENTRES

Prison Service Headquarters recommend that prisons have visitor centres. For suggestions on how to make them child friendly *see 2.11-2.21*

2.9 WELCOME AT THE PRISON GATE

Reception at the gate should be as welcoming as possible both in terms of staff attitude and physical layout. Where notices are meant for children they should be colourful and at the right height to be looked at. Too many notices, especially in black and white, can be unwelcoming and are unlikely to be read properly. A few well-placed, well-prepared ones, which are altered from time to time, are more likely to be effective. Wider use of graphics makes information more accessible for speakers of other languages, those with low literacy, children etc.

2.10 SEARCHING OF CHILDREN

How and why children are searched should be clearly explained to visitors beforehand. All searches should be sensitively approached.

To ensure both children and staff are safeguarded; there should always be two officers present. Women officers should search all children under 12, with the child's parent/carer present and with their permission. The officer should explain the process to the child in a friendly way; ideally there might also be an information poster on this (e.g. Kids VIP poster). The officer should go down to the child's height and if appropriate could joke to the child while searching, or make a game of the process. The use of even passive dogs may be culturally difficult for some visitors and frightening to some children.

2.11 VISITOR CENTRES

What constitutes a visitor centre varies both in definition and in fact, from a bus shelter with no facilities, outside a prison, to the ultimate purpose designed visitor centre with a wide range of facilities. There are a number of things that a visitor centre can provide to ensure a good welcome to all visitors, including children, some of which are considered below.

2.12 VISITOR CENTRES SHOULD BE 'A GOOD PLACE TO BE'

At the very least a visitor centre is fulfilling its purpose if it provides a comfortable area for visitors to wait, enabling visitors and children to recover from the journey before the visit. In most prisons this should also include providing light refreshments, a friendly face, information and an easy booking facility for visitors so that they can book in and relax, knowing they will be called for their visit in due course. Visitor centres may also provide a useful venue for visitors to debrief after the visit, particularly if the visit has gone badly or they have concerns about the prisoner, before they make the journey home again. The visitor centre may provide the one situation where visitors can share their experiences and problems as prisoners' families. The general running of the visitor centre is not the subject of this guide, which is looking specifically at provision for children. Further help can be found:

- Advice and information on visitor centres via Action for Prisoners Families. (see APF website.)

- Many visitor centres are engaged in working towards Recognising Quality using a PQASSO based self-assessment quality assessment tool for visitor centres in monitoring and improving their service to visitors, although the reference to provision for children is very general. Recognising Quality can be found on the NOMS website.

- Visitor Centre Good Practice Guide with various references to children, which remain relevant.

2.13 HOW TO MAKE THE VISITOR CENTRE A WELCOMING PLACE FOR CHILDREN

What visitor centres offer to children will vary from the minimum requirement of a box of toys to a fully supervised play area, although parents retain responsibility for their children at all times in the visitor centre.

The aim is to make waiting less stressful for children, by providing something to keep them safe and to occupy them in a child friendly way. As so often, first it is the approach and welcome from staff, secondly good information and thirdly the facilities, which are important. What most visitors want is a pleasant space to be in and staff should be aware that they are coming because they have to. A balance needs to be struck between providing clear information and a welcoming environment possibly with art rather than drugs posters on the walls.

2.14 ROLE OF STAFF

Staff at the welcome desk should welcome individual children, and ideally be close to a visibly child-friendly area (maybe where the box of toys is). They should also be able to give information (both written and verbal) to parents and carers and be on hand for any queries or difficulties which may arise.

Generally staff should be child friendly, e.g. congratulating children on pictures drawn and offering to put them up on a notice board, looking after special toys with sensitivity, if child is concerned about the lockers etc. In Northern Ireland a shoebox is used to make leaving the toy less frightening, and so that it can be security cleared and then taken into a child friendly visit.

Visitor centre staff may be told about particular requirements or they may notice that individual visitors would benefit from additional help. They should give this information to prison visit play area and search staff. Good communication of this sort smoothes the visit and may also spare visitors' embarrassment.

It is unusual to have designated play workers waiting to play with children in the visitor centre. However the prison visits room play worker may be in the visitor centre checking the rota etc, and could then talk to the children or if they have time even provide play dough or another simple craft activity. In some prisons children's workers who will be in the play area in visits meet the children at the visitor centre and so build relationships. This provides valuable continuity and may be particularly helpful in facilitating good child centred visits.

2.15 TRAINING

All staff will need to know and may need training on the impact of imprisonment on children and families, how to work in a child friendly way, and child protection. (Kids VIP can deliver training to visitor centre staff in conjunction with play staff.)

2.16 INFORMATION

Visitor centres should offer a wide variety of information to visitors.

Ideally visitors will have been given much of the information in advance on identification and general visiting procedures at the prison, and what the visitor centre and the prison offer, including specific facilities for babies, children and young people (*see 2. 2 above*).

Specifically they may need to remind visitors that in the visitor centre as well as in the prison, parents or carers have responsibility for children at all times and must take children to the loo and only allow them to go alone if they are really able to look after themselves.

Visitors need to know that a left child policy operates and to inform parents/carers that in cases where children are used to smuggle drugs, child protection measures may be invoked.

The visitor centre should offer:

Child friendly information (as described in 1.12). This may include a video or photo display of what prison is like so children can see where the prisoner eats, sleeps etc. This must be sensitively done, as children do not necessarily know they are coming to prison, therefore videos and pictures of a cell may not be suitable for general use. Information for families, both booklets and videos, e.g on how to tell children about imprisonment and how important, for the children's wellbeing, it is for parents /carers to tell children the truth, however difficult it is. (*As described in 1.31 Confusion*)

2.17 FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN

The visitor centre should provide appropriate facilities for visiting children

- Essential play equipment
- Some provision for teenagers and older children
- An outside play area
- Toilet and nappy changing facilities.
- Sensible food and drink for children at reasonable prices
- Provision for breast-feeding mothers
- Safe storage of buggies

ESSENTIAL PLAY EQUIPMENT

All visitor centres should provide easily maintained resources for children. There should be no toys containing small pieces, which would be damaging to young children. Cleaning to ensure equipment looks clean and is not sticky, and there are no obvious health and safety risks (e.g. broken sharp edges) should be done daily, and play workers can do a more thorough risk assessment weekly.

Visitor centres need a no toy guns policy both to promote peaceful play, but also to avoid security concerns with replica guns. . Suggested resources :

- pen and paper
- puzzle sheets
- large toys requiring no supervision e.g. kitchen, garage, bean bags
- bookstall (although in some areas this may be scarcely used)

- boxes of duplo (or other simple construction kit)
- dolls and pushchairs
- toy pots and pans
- culturally diverse jigsaws with up to 20 pieces
- a notice board for children's work also reflecting special days, such as Hallowe'en, Eid , Fathers' Day, Mothers' Day etc
- high chairs and other children's seats

TEENAGERS AND OLDER CHILDREN

There are differing views about how best to cater for teenagers: in HMP Durham a separate teenagers' room has operated successfully, with a worker responsible for cleaning and health and safety. Popular equipment for teenagers is: Play stations, Wiis, videos, a computer (good for making notices), a pool table, hand held monitors etc. Teenagers can take nothing out of the room. If the room is not open, visitor centre staff can give out hand held games but have to keep a very close eye on them! However there could be dangers with this model, as the teenage room could become a no-go area, and possibly it is easier to manage a defined part of the open plan visitor centre, specifically for older children with very robust fittings to hold computers etc. Teenagers like teenage magazines, but it is hard to find those that will be both 'cool' for the young people and also acceptable to all parents and staff. Board and other games such as monopoly and mastermind should also be available, as a minority of teenagers will play them.

OUTSIDE PLAY AREA

Ideally there would be an outside area with a climbing frame and other play equipment so that after a long journey children can let off steam. All equipment needs to meet very high specifications with an annual ROSPA safety check. Water features and ponds should be avoided in this area however attractive they might appear to be. Various visitor centres have found that it is possible to obtain funding for outside areas through local network and community funds. As elsewhere the parents are responsible for their children when they are outside.

TOILET AND NAPPY FACILITIES

Toilets, if possible, would include some low loos for children, and would also include a baby changing facility. If this is not situated in the women's toilet, it can also be accessible to men bringing babies to visit in the prison. It may also be helpful if the visitor centre keeps a store of dry changes of clothes as children visiting may well have accidents, and spare nappies and baby wipes are also useful. Some visitor centres sell nappies for use in the prison. (N.B. Parents, not visitor centre staff, are responsible for taking their children to the toilet.)

FOOD

Visitor centre cafes are bound by strict health and hygiene regulations.

They should aim to provide cheap, desirable child friendly and healthy food, but will also have to consider what foods visitors will buy. In some cases the prison kitchen will make fresh sandwiches. It is worth considering the effect of foods on children's behaviour and selling healthy drinks may promote much calmer visits.

Colas and other fizzy drinks containing artificial sweeteners, colourings and flavourings may promote hyperactive behaviour in some children. The presence of nuts must be clearly advertised as some children have dangerous nut allergies.

Some visitor centres sell at cost price several common brands of baby milk in bottles, which the prison allows into the visits room; they ask visitors to tell them in advance if other specified varieties of milk are required. Although not commonly required visitor centres should be able to provide breast feeding mothers with a quiet place to feed. A simple solution would be to make the baby changing area more attractive and provide a suitable chair there.

SAFE STORAGE OF BUGGIES

A safe storage system for buggies needs to be devised, otherwise they can be stolen.

Two models have proved possible although neither solution is ideal. Both involve a wire rope, with padlocks, and this fitting can be sited either inside the visitor centre if there is a suitable place, or outside but under cover.

- Visitors on paying £1 deposit are given a padlock and key, which they can use to secure their buggy to the wire rope, and then they can reclaim their money on returning the padlock and key.
- Visitors are given a number, and can padlock their buggy into that number padlock. After the visit they are given (for only the time it takes to open the padlock) the key for their number.

2.18 DRUGS

Drugs are a perennial problem in prison visits and very often visitors are put under immense pressure either by the prisoner they are visiting or others to bring in drugs. They can be assisted to resist this pressure in various ways:

- An amnesty bin (a one way post-box for drugs parcels) may be sited in a suitable place, away from cameras, so that prior to going over to the prison visit and being searched, visitors can drop the drugs in. In reality because of the cost of drugs, they may decide to leave them in the locker and are more likely to take them home and sell them again, if they are not going to try passing them in the visit. However the amnesty bin does indicate that bringing drugs into prisons is against the law.
- The visitor centre working with e.g. Adfam to provide a one-stop shop to assist families affected by drug issues.
- The prisoners' family helpline has also reduced the amount of drugs being brought into prisons, mostly by helping families to resist pressure to bring them in.

ADFAM

Adfam is a charity committed to improving the quality of life for families affected by drug and alcohol misuse. It produces many useful resources (See Adfam website www.adfam.org.uk)

2.19 POLICIES

revised Working Together Statutory Guidance. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children 2010. Responsibilities of Prisons listed on p73 specify that Governors of prisons (or, in the case of contracted prisons, their Directors) also have a duty to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. To ensure visitor centres can deal appropriately with children visiting they will, in addition to other guidelines necessary for the general running of the visitor centre, need the following policies and procedures:

- Complaints
- Confidentiality
- Smoking
- Health and safety
- How to deal with 'left' children
- Child protection

SMOKING

Visitor centres will need to consider whether they need a smoking policy. Some permit smoking in the building recognising the stresses prison visiting provokes, others allow smoking only in the lobby. Good practice would suggest that smoking is so harmful to young babies no smoking should be allowed in the visitor centre and visitors should also be warned that there are smoke alarms in the toilets.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

First Aid training and procedures need to be specifically related to children.

There should be a model form for checking equipment for cleanliness and suitability. In the case of children's accidents, the visitor centre should use the prison accident form and report the incident at the gate.

'LEFT CHILD' POLICY

This has to be robust to ensure that if parents or carers either leave the prison without the children for whatever reason or are unable to look after them, the visitor centre staff are clear about what they should do.

CHILD PROTECTION

Usual practice is that child protection issues arising in the visitor centre should only be reported through the prison. Visitor centre and prison policies should be mutually compatible, and possibly devised in collaboration. In child protection cases any information may be important in piecing together information that makes up the jigsaw of a child's life. (Similar procedures are adopted for issues to do with violence: responsibility for what happens in the visitor centre building is shared between the prison, which owns the building, and the visitor centre management, according to agreed policies and procedures.)

Visitor centre staff must work with the prison, and in turn need from the prison information about how children can be approved for prisoners subject to Safeguarding Children –child contact. Visitor centre staff have a particularly difficult role when initially children are allowed to visit, before the prisoner has been classified, and then the prisoner is classified as a risk to children, subject to restricted visits from children under Safeguarding Children –child contact. It is not recommended to

inform Visitor Centre staff about details of an offender's conviction. If 'visits lists' are available it should only indicate that restrictions apply when allowed visits with children.

2.20 NEED TO REVIEW, MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Visitor centres need to review, monitor and evaluate their work. (PQASSO is particularly helpful in assisting with this.)

In addition visitor centres may like to give children an opportunity to evaluate visits either with specifically designed forms, or with pictures.

2.21 OTHER OPENING TIMES AND USES FOR THE VISITOR CENTRE OR ACTIVITIES TO BE CONSIDERED

The visitor centre may also be used for other activities and purposes although many prisoners' families just want to visit their prisoner relative and not be otherwise overly involved at the prison.

OPENING TIMES

Apart from being open before and after domestic visits, visitor centres need to be open and staffed for almost all other visits which families may make:

- Carers have particular needs if they escort children to child only visits; they may need lunch in addition to some other activity. (They may benefit from one of the courses or activities below being specifically organised for them)
- On Family days before and after the visit
- Families attending ETS (enhanced thinking skills) courses. They may also need someone to explain to them the nature of the course
- If families have come for special visits (e.g. bereavement visits) they may need particular support

WHAT THE VISITOR CENTRE CAN DO TO SUPPORT GOOD VISITS



VISITOR CENTRE PLAY AREA NOT SUPERVISED

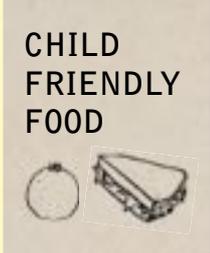
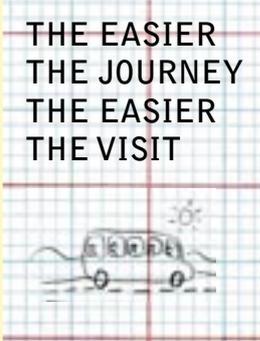
CHANCE FOR CHILDREN TO MEET PLAY WORKERS THEY WILL SEE IN VISITS

VISITOR CENTRE PROVIDES WELCOME AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR CARERS BEFORE AND AFTER THE VISIT

- POLICIES & PROCEDURES**
- HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS TAILORED TO CHILDREN
- SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM HARM
- WORKERS RECRUITMENT TRAINING**
- CRB CHECKS
- CHILDREN'S NEEDS LEFT CHILD POLICY

OTHER INITIATIVES

SECTION 2.21



SAFE STORAGE OF BUGGIES

INFORMATION/COURSES

- Speaker from a voluntary sector organisation already working within the prison to talk to carers about their needs or concerns. (Particularly for carers during child only child centred visits)
- The prison could arrange opportunities to talk to families at induction with more general information
- Resettlement – information from prison on what the prison can offer and families can contribute. The family may be far more influential in getting a prisoner to join a particular programme than any prison officer; they may also know what programmes might be beneficial to their relative
- Provide written information or leaflets giving information about relevant support groups
- Health visitors may be available to assist prisoners' families with health issues
- Information or talks about how to deal with domestic violence
- Benefits advice
- Information on parenting courses, particularly if children's visit is in conjunction with prisoners parenting courses, or information from RELATE (on relationships). Both these last two should be very sensitively offered because some partners or carers may understandably reject the implication that they need this help

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- De-stress opportunities, such as massage, yoga courses etc. Healthy living project also available to community as well as prison visitors.
- Sale of second hand clothes -(If these are offered free, visitor centres may ask for voluntary contributions unless they are concerned the clothes are going to be resold!)
- Community resource for fund raising e.g. disaster appeals
- Drop in for ex prisoners, under consideration
- Other meetings

TO ENSURE PRISON WELCOME AND VISITOR CENTRES ARE CHILD FRIENDLY PLEASE READ CHECKLIST AT THE START OF THE CHAPTER

section 3

DOMESTIC VISITS & PLAY AREAS

section 3:

DOMESTIC PRISON VISITS AND PRISON PLAY PROJECTS

In the previous chapter we saw how prisons could welcome children. This is important because however good the arrangements in the visits room are, if children are frightened before they arrive in visits, or visitors feel they have been badly treated, the visit may well suffer. Here we consider how to make all visits child and family friendly, and particularly how a play area in domestic visits can be set up and run. Both prison and play project need to work to the partnership principles set out in 1.6 and to ensure both prison and play staff are appropriately trained for children to gain maximum benefit from the play area.

PRISON VISITS
CAN HAVE THE
SAME FEELING OF
ARTIFICIALITY AS
HOSPITAL VISITS,
THE FAMILY HAVE
BEEN SEPARATED
AND MANY DO NOT
KNOW WHAT TO TALK
ABOUT, WHETHER TO
SHARE THE FULL
REALITY OF THEIR
SITUATION EITHER
INSIDE OR OUTSIDE
THE PRISON

CHECKLIST

3.1 Prison has considered how to make all visits child and family friendly

3.2 Ambience

3.3 Prison staff and Kids VIP training

3.4 Toilet arrangements for visitors including children

3.5 Refreshments

3.6 The Prison has considered the need for a play area and developed it according to good practice in relation to the following issues:

- The purpose of play areas

3.7 Starting up a play project

- Frequency of play sessions – assessment of needs and needs analysis

3.8 Information for visitors about play project

3.9 Design of play area

3.10 Physical layout and siting of clearly defined play area

- Other points to be taken into account when setting up a prison play area

3.11 Legal requirements

3.12 Appropriate toys and equipment

- Financing the toys and equipment
- For younger children
- For all ages
- For older children
- Cleaning materials
- Unsuitable equipment
- Provision for Closed visits, and other individual visits

3.13 The prison and play project take safeguarding children from harm seriously, have considered the following and where appropriate followed policies and procedures with action

3.14 Behaviour policy

3.15 Health and Safety allocation of responsibilities

3.16 Responsibilities in the prison for child protection

- Prisons, safeguarding children and MAPPA

- Training for prison staff

3.17 Play project policy to be agreed with prison on safeguarding children from harm

3.18 Ways in which the play project can help safeguard children

- Disclosure, vetting and screening volunteers

- Training and support

- Training for playworkers (paid or voluntary) should cover implementing child protection policy and procedures:

- Training for play coordinators and play project managers should include the development of child protection policy and procedures

3.19 Good practice to ensure protection of staff and children:

- Behaviour management
- Playworkers' own behaviour
- Promoting Equality of Opportunity
- Protecting volunteers
- Personal hygiene

3.20 Procedures for dealing with suspected child abuse

3.21 How to record concerns

3.22 Management of play project

- Adopting policies and procedures
- Contractual arrangement
- Finance
- Legal requirements
- Insurance

3.23 Policy and practice in Employment and Staffing of play project (both paid and volunteer staff)

- Play coordinator
- Play workers –voluntary or paid
- Recruitment and screening
- Selection and Security Clearance
- Induction
- Supervision, Support, Appraisal, Accountability
- Support and training for play coordinators
- Training for voluntary play workers

3.24 How prison can thank volunteers

3.25 Information in visits hall for volunteers especially on "what to do if ..."

3.26 Recording

3.27 Monitoring and evaluation

3.1 CHILD AND FAMILY FRIENDLY VISITS

Prison visits have the same feeling of artificiality as hospital visits with many of the same issues. The family have been separated and many do not know what to talk about-- whether to share the full reality of their situation either inside or outside the prison. Very often prisoners are jealous of their wives on the outside, and visitors may mask the difficulties they are having coping without the prisoner. Added to this are all the usual communication difficulties families experience, which are exacerbated in the case of some more disadvantaged prisoners and their families.

Over the last 25 years there has been an increasing awareness of the needs of children (and indirectly of their parents and other adults) in prison visits rooms. Most prisons now offer some form of play facility, though the scope of these ranges from an unstaffed corner of a visits room with a few toys, through to well equipped play areas staffed by qualified childcare workers. The provision of some sort of supervised play space (often staffed by volunteers) has become the norm (104 prisons in England and Wales now offer supervised play for at least some visits) and is recommended for every prison if a needs analysis indicates this. Unsupervised children are more likely to harm themselves or others in the area and even if they are provided with toys they may often destroy them in a short space of time, particularly if the toys are not attractively presented and safety checked before each visit. The same unruly children, supervised by caring play workers, may well become fun and appealing! However, children are exuberant and do run; this is normal.

All aspects of prison visits are governed by the PSI introduced in 2011: [Providing Visits and Services to Visitors](#)

Once inside the visits room the only contact with the imprisoned relative usually takes place at a designated table, often with three seats allocated for the adult visitors and another clearly identified seat for the prisoner. The Visits PSI requires that additional seating be made available for additional child visitors. Prisoners are often not allowed to move from the table or sit on the floor to play with their children. This is hard for families used to normal family contact. Young children find it difficult to sustain a conversation seated at a table for any length of time. Because visits are the only opportunity the adults have to see one another, children sometimes seem excluded from the conversation and in visits rooms with no special facilities they end up running around the room, interfering with other visits and officers' security concerns.

3.2. AMBIENCE

The whole ambience of the visits room will impact on the visit. It should be bright and cheerful, but calm. If it can be softened so that it is not frightening with pictures on the walls, curtains, softer lighting and less institutional furniture, this will also contribute to better visits. It is important that all furniture is risk assessed with children in mind with no sharp edges at toddler height. Although fixed seating is favoured for security reasons, from the families' perspective ideally there would be no fixed seating and space between tables offering privacy. One prisoner mother has described the difficulties of not being at her child's level and wanting a low table for her visit. Family friendly seating near the play area can work well.

3.3. PRISON STAFF AND KIDS VIP TRAINING

How prison staff behave in visits may be even more important than the physical surroundings. If officers are purposeful and pleasant and leave families to have their visits peacefully without either interrupting or standing too close to them, it is much easier. In some prisons family contact development officers (see supporting materials) will be available during the visit to talk to families, or personal officers may come to the visit if there are particular issues to discuss. It is a difficult balance for prison officers to remain focused on their prime security target and remain child friendly, smiling with children and encouraging them; there are many very good officers who manage this. Kids VIP offers training for prison staff in visits. If prison officers understand the issues for children and families they are far more likely to be child friendly in their approach. *see 1.3 and 1.6* Positive relationships with families can be further developed through a family development officer or family link worker role either of specific officers or for all visits officers. It needs to clear who will manage the role and to ensure that time is ring fenced. See—Keeping in Touch—the case for family support work in Prison. Nancy Loucks 2005. Contact pact www.prisonadvice.org.uk for details about the support work model and relevant training.

WEBSITE

WWW.PRISONADVICE.ORG.UK

- Dedicated visits teams can ensure good relationships.

3.4 TOILET ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITORS INCLUDING CHILDREN

This is an issue which visits rooms have to deal with: some visits have to be terminated if a visitor needs to go to the toilet, in others the visitor must leave the visits room, and then be re-searched for security reasons on returning. Not surprisingly visitors and parents find it hard to leave their precious visit and sometimes children may soil themselves during a 2-hour visit, or children be left with unchanged nappies. The more information visitors have in advance about toileting arrangements the easier they will find it to prepare themselves and their children.

Where toilets are provided there should also be nappy changing facilities; ideally these would also be available for men changing nappies. Taking children to the toilet is the parents' responsibility.

See safeguarding children 3.13-3.21

3.5 REFRESHMENTS

Having a cup of tea together normalises the visit for many prisoners and visitors. As in the visitor centre the balance between healthy and popular food is difficult to achieve. Certainly drinks with a lot of food additives should be avoided, as should lollipops, which can be harmful for small children on the move. It is much more friendly for visitors if they can buy food and drink in the visits room from people serving behind a tea bar, who contribute to a warmer atmosphere in visits. In some prisons, prisoners run the tea bar. The disadvantage with private franchise, rather than voluntary providers or by employing someone direct, is that any profit goes out of the prison, rather than being available to be used to benefit prisoners' families. Similarly if the prison for whatever reason prefers to have drink and snack machines, they should ensure that the franchise is not punitive making the drinks very expensive for families, so that only the machine contractors gain. *See funding 3.20.*

They should also ensure that drinks machines are working and well supplied and families have been informed about what change they will need for them. In some prisons families are allowed to take in £10 in change for food and drink in visits. This high limit may put pressure on families on low incomes to spend more than they can afford. Some prisons allow babies' bottles to go into visits and either the prison or the refreshment bar in visits rooms may provide bottle warmers, microwave, jug of hot water etc.

3.6 PLAY AREAS

Play areas in visits rooms serve two main functions:

- They make the experience of visiting prisons less traumatic and more enjoyable for children
- They enable adults to spend time talking without constant interruption from bored children.

The play area should not detract from the purpose of the visit, which is that children should maintain and develop their relationship with the prisoner. Play workers should encourage children to move back and forth between the play area and the visits table during the visit, showing their work etc, unless the child seems unwilling.

Parents and carers remain responsible for their children at all times even when the children are in the play area.

3.7 STARTING UP A PLAY PROJECT

The first step is to find a small team of people interested and willing to help within the prison. The Head of Prisoner Activities, Probation Officers, Visits Senior Officer and Chaplains may be willing to volunteer. It is important that an officer from visits is in this team, since the visits group run the visits room and their contribution and co-operation are essential.

Frequency of play sessions –assessment of needs and needs analysis

To determine what level of service is needed it may be helpful to conduct a needs analysis including the number of children in the visits room on a daily basis for about a month; this should be easy where all visits are booked. This will give an indication as to when the play area is likely to be needed most. It may be wise to open only two or three days per week at first at the busiest sessions. It is important that when booking visits visitors know when play is provided so that they may be able to target their visits for when play is available.

I always book my visits for when you (play workers) are here. I have to drive three and a half hours each way. Julie (2) is desperate when we get here and the play area calms her down and gives her something to do, so me and her dad can talk. She needs to see her dad but only for some of the time.

-Mother visiting.

Possibly activity packs (similar to those suggested under closed visits) could be made available for children at less busy visits, where no play worker is present. Sometimes officers can advise play projects in advance of the numbers of children visiting. Volunteers can plan to come or not as required.

It is important that play staff are reliable and that the play area is open when prison staff and visitors expect it to be. Visitors may well plan their visits to coincide with the area being open and it is very frustrating for them if no play staff turn up for the session.

3.8 INFORMATION FOR VISITORS ABOUT PLAY PROJECT

Many play projects have successfully produced a parent/carer handbook, which explains how and when the play area operates, so they know what to expect and the behaviour policy everyone is working to.

Contact Kids VIP for examples of current information and for Behaviour policy see 3.14



Children's murals can be a good way to improve a space, inspired by Bell Scott

3.9 DESIGN OF PLAY AREA

To fulfil these functions play areas have to be attractive and welcoming to children of all ages and from different cultural and social backgrounds. They need to be bright and cheerful and many have murals or cartoons on the walls. Prison education departments have often assisted with creating murals, which also gives prisoners a sense of ownership. One prison education department decorated a play area as a piece of GCSE art course work. Pastel shades may be more appropriate; a play area painted in primary colours had to be swiftly repainted as it provoked aggressive behaviour in the children!

Child-sized tables and chairs at which children can draw or do puzzles, and a range of floor and table toys are proven favourites. A notice board where children's artwork can be displayed provides some children with a sense of continuity when they come back the next day or a fortnight later and

their picture is still on the wall. If the room permits, creating a feeling of different spaces with a quiet area, as well as more active play area, may help.

It is particularly important to ensure that older children and teenagers are made welcome, with indications that their age group is catered for, e.g. with pop or football posters, teenage magazines, suggestions for more complicated arts activities, computers and definitely larger tables and chairs for them. One of the 'spaces' created could be a 'cool zone' for teenagers.

Kids VIP can give advice on setting up and equipping prison play areas-see also section on toys and equipment below. Obviously many play areas are/will be created in visits halls where space is very short, or are multi purpose and used for visits and for serving dinner too. Elements from this wish list for play areas can often be incorporated with will and ingenuity.



Good play layout

3.10 PHYSICAL LAYOUT

Siting of clearly defined play area

The play area should be placed within the visit room to ensure it is accessible and visible to as much of the visit room as possible. If feasible, families with children should be seated near the play area. If officers are flexible they should be able to accommodate even large families, rather than have children excluded from the visit. Where possible the layout of seating in the visits room in relation to the play area should consider the siting of 'vulnerable prisoners' to ensure the visit does not provide opportunities for grooming.

It is particularly important that the play area is clearly defined as a special area, and some form of barrier with an entrance point also helps to ensure that most of the toys stay inside the area. Fixed attractive railings with no gate are recommended.

It is important that children do not feel cut off from their parents when they are in the play area. The alternative uses that imaginative young minds could find for all play area equipment, and particularly fixtures such as the partitioning, need to be considered. If the play area barrier is just the right height for climbing on and jumping off, it may actually represent a danger to unsupervised children as well as a source of irritation to anyone unfortunate enough to be sitting nearby.

OTHER POINTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN SETTING UP A PRISON PLAY AREA

(Kids VIP agreed this list with NOMS Estate Directorate; additional comments are in italics.)

- Good visibility from all areas in the room; the parents are liable for their children only if they are in eyesight.
- A see-through barrier or fence – no gate, just a gap for entry, should define the play area. Children should be able to see their parents either through the bars or see-through Perspex. Any barrier should be in accordance with current legislation
- Light should be provided.
- Electric sockets, to be avoided if possible, but in rare circumstances where they exist they should be out of reach of children with safety sockets fitted.
- Radiators and hot pipes must be boxed in.



Good example of display boards

- Play area should not be situated near the refreshment area/vending machines because of the danger of spillage of hot drinks.
- Flooring e.g. Carpet tiles – non-slip, cleanable and soft.
- Display Boards made available on the wall for displaying children's work.
- Storage for toys, ideally in the play area, must be lockable.

All toys and equipment, including tables and chairs must be locked away, or not within children's reach when there is no supervision because at these times the play area will be attractive to children. They should either be locked or left so that nothing can be jumped from or damaged. Access to a large cupboard or other storage area

where toys can be locked away when not in use is very important. This reduces the likelihood of anything being broken or lost when the area is unsupervised, and allows the staff to choose appropriate toys for the children attending on any given day. On weekdays most children visiting tend to be under school age, but at weekends and in school holidays older children will also want to use the area. Some children may be visiting every day if their parent is on remand, and it is useful to be able to vary the toys and activities so that they do not become bored.

- Look out for sharp items at children's eye level, e.g. Fire extinguishers.
- No panic buttons in the play area.
- Ideally, particularly where visits last for over an hour, a sink with water can be provided so that painting can be offered as an activity.

3.11 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The childcare requirements of the 1989 Children Act do not directly affect supervised play provision in prisons where the children remain in sight of their parents, and the parents know they have retained responsibility for their children at all times. (It is therefore important that parents are made aware of this.) However play areas should be run according to best possible practice, and as far as possible in line with the Children Act requirements, which embody good practice. Many of the suggestions made here are contained in the Act. If children are to be cared for in a separate room with no direct and easy access to their parents then it is likely that the facility would need to be registered. In that case it will be inspected by OFSTED and need to meet their standards. Many high quality prison play projects would not be able to meet OFSTED regulations either physically or in staffing levels given the unpredictable numbers of children visiting. *Where prisons or voluntary organisations regularly operate crèches in separate rooms, and parents transfer responsibility for their children to the crèche, OFSTED will regulate this.*

3.12. GUIDANCE ON TOYS AND EQUIPMENT

The choice of toys and equipment for the play area should be left to the play coordinator and volunteers, although Kids VIP can offer advice if needed. Generally a diverse range of toys suitable for children with different ethnic backgrounds and of various ages needs to be available. It is worth remembering that many children come to prison visits dressed in their best clothes so adequate protective clothing (aprons etc) must be provided if any messy activities such as painting or water play are to be included. Toys and equipment do receive hard treatment and so need to

be robust; this should be checked prior to purchasing. Generally battery or noisy toys will not be useful. Where space is a real issue the play project and the prison may explore using more wall mounted toys.

Storage as mentioned in 3.9 must be considered.

FINANCING THE TOYS AND EQUIPMENT

An initial grant should provide basic equipment, depending on the size of the area and on how much of the initial fitting of the area can be done by the prison. After that an annual amount should be allocated for replacement toys and equipment. This may come from the profits from the sale of refreshments in the visits room. Some prisons have workshops where toys are (or could be) made and some very impressive play furniture, shops, rocking horses, and dolls' houses have been donated to play areas by such workshops. Prisoners are also good at raising money for charity, and may be persuaded that helping to provide equipment for their children in the visits hall play area is a worthy cause. PE departments are often particularly involved in this sort of activity with sponsored sports events or feasts raising very helpful sums.

Contact Kids VIP for costings.

Resources must be age appropriate and multicultural, and must meet Health and Safety requirements; the kite mark is useful in identifying equipment as safe.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Dolls' house, and a variety of dolls
- Kitchen furniture (provides imaginative, social and role play)
- Dressing up clothes
- Small world toys (garage or farm, play mats etc.)
- Construction toys (Lego, Duplo and stickle bricks)
- Simple games
- Telephones --always popular

FOR ALL AGES

- Art and activities: A variety of drawing and writing materials suitable for a wide age range
- Materials for sticking /craft/ collage activities
- Paper plates-very versatile as masks, hats, puppets etc.
- Chalkboard
- Felt or other notice boards for displaying children's work (if permitted)
- Books - simple pictorial books. Some may be suitable for all ages although in some prisons they are scarcely used
Files with suggestions of activities, created by children. Making posters can be particularly popular.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- Computers and play stations
- Teenage magazines. It is sometimes difficult to find ones attractive to young people, and acceptable to adults!
- A variety of games (Scrabble, Connect 4 etc)
- Jigsaws

CLEANING MATERIALS

- Tissues, hypoallergenic baby wipes, etc.

UNSUITABLE EQUIPMENT

Depending on the category of the prison, there may be security restrictions on use of the following items:

- Malleable materials such as play dough or Blu Tack, foil paper, cling film, polystyrene, sand, and scissors.

However most prisons can find a way of allowing scissors- either they are kept locked at the desk by officers and have to be returned, or play workers have them attached to their belt. It is very difficult to work entirely with plastic scissors. It is important to avoid photographs of children on notice boards for child protection purposes.

For security and to encourage peaceful play there should be no swords and guns or syringes.

Television and videos are no substitute for playworkers, and if there are playworkers, they will usually prove more interesting than any video.

WHAT PLAY STAFF CAN TAKE INTO PRISONS

RECOMMENDED

TOY CARS, GARAGES ETC



TOY KITCHENS, COOKING ETC



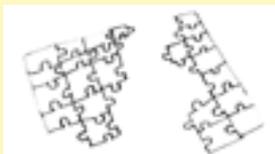
LEGO, BUILDING BLOCKS



PENS, PAINTS, PAPER ETC



JIGSAWS



GAMEBOY



NOT RECOMMENDED

MAGNETS



MALLEABLE MATERIALS
SAND, DOUGH ETC



KNIVES



TOY GUNS



SYRINGES



CLOSED VISITS, AND OTHER INDIVIDUAL VISITS

Children have not chosen to be on closed visits, and particularly if the family arrive not knowing that their visit will be a closed one, there then needs to be some provision made for children. In some cases the layout means that children will be able to use the general play area, although it is important to ensure that they remain within sight of their parents. Otherwise play workers could create and keep a set of age appropriate activity boxes for use on closed visits, or other individual visits, or when there are too few children to justify a play worker. It may be possible to obtain material for these activity packs through prisoners' education workshops. They may just be pencils and paper for noughts and crosses.

If officers let play workers know that there are children on closed visits even on a visit by visit basis, many will be able to provide something suitable. As so often communication is all-important.

After handing out these materials, play workers or officers will also probably have to collect them up again.

3.13 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM HARM

(3.13-3.21)

Children, regardless of age, have a right to be safe and protected from situations which could physically or psychologically damage them.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;

- undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully. All safeguarding responsibilities are governed by Working Together Statutory Guidance. The particular responsibilities of Prisons are on p73.

This comprehensive document also offers descriptions of abuse and guidance on how to deal with suspected abuse. Kids VIP can advise on best practice safeguarding in prisons. www.kidsvip.co.uk

Working Together to Safeguard Children - a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

WEBSITE

WWW.EDUCATION.GOV.UK/PUBLICATIONS/STANDARD/PUBLICATIONDETAIL/PAGE1/DCSF-00305-2010

3.14 BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The play area behaviour policy should be obviously displayed in a clear, simple and attractive form on large posters so that parents are aware that they are responsible for their children at all times and that their children will be treated in a consistent, fair and friendly way, valuing their differences, and seeking to understand them. Parents also need to know that if play staff cannot manage a child's behaviour their parent will be asked for help. It should be stressed that it is the behaviour which is seen as a possible problem, not the child, and that positive behaviour is acknowledged.

Contact Kids VIP for sample behaviour

3.15 HEALTH AND SAFETY

This is a joint responsibility with the prison. See table on next page for allocation of responsibilities.

ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS IN PRISON PLAY AREAS

PRISON

responsible for ensuring:

ANNUAL RISK ASSESSMENT OF WHOLE VISITING ROOM

- Play area risk assessment should be made in consultation with play coordinators annually.

MANAGEMENT

- Host prison and service provider agree procedures to be used should first aid be required by any child in the play area.
- There is a trained first aider (who is trained in appropriate treatment for children) accessible during visits and waiting times.
- There are first aid kits available.
- There are appropriate accident forms available and will inform parents of children's accidents, and if this is prison procedure ask parent to sign forms.
- Record numbers of children visiting, if not already recorded for fire safety purposes during booking in.
- There is a left child policy should a child somehow be left at the prison.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS:

- Visiting area is kept reasonably clean.
- Floor surfaces are sound, even, non-slip and no carpet corners curled up.
- Heating appliances in visiting area are not free standing but safe, secure and guarded with socket covers and any leads of electrical appliances are secure.
- There are no sharp items, including fire extinguishers especially at child's eye height.
- No furniture or fixtures are obviously climbable by children and no furniture to be stacked.
- Panic buttons are not sited in reach of children in play area. (Panic buttons are not usually needed for play coordinators).
- Play area is not near refreshment bar/vending machines. Children are not permitted to carry hot drinks.
- Children do not use area when no supervision is available.

PRISON & PLAY CO-ORDINATORS

responsible for ensuring:

- Parents are aware that they are responsible for their own children at all times and in particular for taking them to the toilet.
- Parents remove items from the child's person that could endanger the child or other children.
- They establish procedures and ensure that prison service staff and play area staff are aware of and if appropriate have been given necessary training in:
 - COSHH (control of substances hazardous to health-body fluids etc.) procedures, protective gloves should be available in cupboard.
 - Infectious diseases policy (including ensuring that parents are made aware that children with clear indications of infectious diseases may not play in the play area).
 - How to deal with accidents and how to access first aid treatment.
 - Fire Safety procedures (including fire alarms, door routes out of visits areas and designated muster points).
 - No locker keys are brought into the play area by children.
 - There is joint training of Prison Officers in visits rooms and Play Co-ordinators as appropriate.

PLAY CO-ORDINATORS

responsible for ensuring:

- All play workers understand the issues of confidentiality and child protection as they affect the operation of the play area, including what touching is appropriate and how to pass on any concerns.
- All playworkers are responsible for themselves not being a danger to children (no sharp jewellery etc).
- The provision of suitable and safe toys for children (i.e. no pencils in mouths when running etc.) Play leaders should have a check list of dangerous items and those small enough to be swallowed e.g. pen lids, rubbers etc. This should be displayed within the play area or the inside of the resources cupboard.
- No food or drink is brought into the play area.
- They are familiar with and make reports on all accidents on the correct prison accident forms (which should be made available to them).
- They keep records of all play sessions including numbers of children visiting.
- The training of volunteers.

RISK ASSESSMENT OF AREA IN ADDITION TO ANNUAL AREA ASSESSMENT WITH PRISON

- Regular minor risk assessments to ensure area is safe for children, before each play session including checking accident and message book and removing broken toys/equipment. Play workers need own checklist prior to visit.
- Regular programme of maintaining the area and cleaning toys and equipment.

Ideally use water and tissues or if wipes used, must be hypoallergenic. Know where body fluids kits are and procedures. See Infection control guidance www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/PDF/infect_poster.pdf

VISIT WEBSITE

WWW.HPA.ORG.UK/TOPICS/INFECTIOUSDISEASES/INFECTIONS/AZ/SCHOOLSGUIDANCEONINFECTIONCONTROL

3.16 RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PRISON FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection is a very sensitive area. Some carers whose relatives are in prison will feel particularly vulnerable to any enquiries into the welfare of their children. Children with relatives in prison may already be suffering disadvantage. However proportionate safeguards are always necessary and some children of prisoners may be at risk.

Projects providing play in prison visits rooms need to work *in effective partnership* with the prison to create and work to good policies, practice and procedures to ensure that prison visits are as safe as possible for children visiting. Play coordinators should be given clear instructions for reporting protocols in the event that there is cause for concern. The team approach will lead to greater awareness and safer visits.

PRISONS, SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND TRAINING

There are prison regulations regarding contact between those who present a risk to children, this includes correspondence, telephone and visits. It is necessary to screen and manage visits contact with children to certain prisoners to ensure that visits are in the children's best interests.

Prisons are governed by the Visits PSI which specifies:

3.12 Governors of prisons have a duty to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Governors should ensure that any staff working directly with the children of offenders are trained in child protection. (This is adapted from *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010*, which sets out statutory inter-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of

children). The guidance can be found at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00305-2010>

3.13 Where a prisoner who is assessed as posing a risk to children is allowed a visit from a specific child, staff should refer to *Safeguarding Children: Child Contact protocols in the Public Protection Manual*. This also contains guidance on observation and seating arrangements.

Kids VIP offers safeguarding advice and accredited training. Please see www.kidsvip.co.uk

WEBSITE

WWW.KIDSVIP.CO.UK

It is possible that there will be children visiting prisons who are subject to various forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Everyone in the prison has a duty to report real suspicions according to an agreed procedure. They may contribute to building up a picture of abuse, or may be the only people to notice a child at risk.

3.17 PLAY PROJECT POLICIES ON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM HARM

The prison and the play project must adopt and work to a robust safeguarding policy for visits. The sample principles of a safeguarding policy for the play project in the prison visits room might be:

HM PRISON AGREES

- That safeguarding children is important.
- To ensure that staff follow national guidance.
- To provide ongoing support for prison staff. (Increased awareness can be stressful, and debriefing is essential).
- To collaborately strive towards continuous improvement and better work practices.

PERFECT PLAY PROVIDER IS WORKING TO THESE PRINCIPLES

- Concern for families of prisoners is at the heart of our work. We aim to provide a safe and appropriate environment for children and young people who access our services. (The play provider may make a helpful contribution to child welfare in prison visits.)
- To endeavour to work according to good practice, to protect and respect all children and the adults working with them.

- To follow safe recruitment processes.
- All management, staff and volunteers have a responsibility for protecting children and the organisation has a responsibility to ensure that they are properly trained in safeguarding children and understand and agree this policy, and to support them in implementing it .
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately according to procedures agreed by the host prison and the play provider.
- Confidentiality will be maintained except according to clear and necessary guidelines, when information will be passed on to specified people.
- To listen and respond to the views of children and young people and their carers.
- We are committed to reviewing the working arrangement at least every two years with the host prison to continue to improve the service and develop best practice.

3.18 WAYS IN WHICH THE PLAY PROJECT CAN HELP TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN IN THE PLAY AREA

The play project must ensure that the following are in place as part of their actions to safeguard children:

Disclosure, vetting and screening volunteers. *See 3.23*

Ongoing training and support for all staff.

Training for playworkers (paid or voluntary) should cover implementing child protection policy and procedures:

- **Definitions of abuse**
- **Identifying signs of abuse**
- **Managing emotions and feelings**
- **Recording information**

In addition play project coordinators and managers who will have to develop child protection policy and procedures will need to understand, and may need training in:

- **Child protection issues within the prison environment**
- **Child protection, lines of accountability and reporting protocols**
- **Relevant legislation governing the protection of children**
- **Staff recruitment (see disclosure and screening of volunteers)**

3.19 GOOD PRACTICE TO ENSURE PROTECTION OF STAFF AND CHILDREN BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

To enable play workers and volunteers to provide the best possible service to everyone involved it is necessary to establish a framework for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This should then be written down in a behaviour policy for children and staff in the play area and be widely displayed and included in written information provided for staff, parents and children.

Aim to be consistent, fair and friendly. Remember it takes time for children to learn the codes of behaviour which many older children and adults take for granted. It is important that everyone involved in the play area understands and follows the behaviour policy.

PLAY WORKERS' OWN BEHAVIOUR

Physical contact when playing with and caring for children is important. When children clearly invite contact, and it is appropriate, play workers may respond. However, children may demand physical affection beyond what play workers feel is appropriate. It is the adult workers' responsibility to set clear boundaries in their working relationships with children and to deal with any inappropriate behaviour assertively with an explanation, without rejecting the child.

PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Coordinators should take the lead in ensuring that there is a whole team approach to implementing equal opportunities. A good starting point would be for the play project to formulate or adopt an equal opportunities policy that is reviewed on a regular basis and values the diversity of staff and service users.

Encourage children and adults to refrain from making stereotypical remarks or assumptions. Ensure that information about equal opportunities is clear, available and accessible to all those using and working in the play area. *Contact Kids VIP for sample policies/forms etc.*

PROTECTING VOLUNTEERS

The procedures in the play area should protect against the possibility of child abuse within the play area and protect volunteers from false accusations.

Every effort should be made to ensure that no worker is left alone with a child or a group of children. However, it must be recognised that this is not always possible. Children should remain visible and audible to their parents/carers at all times.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Children in prison play areas remain the responsibility of their parent/carers at all times and only their accompanying adult should take them to the toilet. This protects both the child and members of staff and should prevent false allegations.

Please note: This applies to supervised play areas, but where the responsibility for the child is specifically passed to playworkers, e.g. in a crèche, in a prison in the women's estate, or in particular prisons where the visits room is very small or busy, different rules may apply.

3.20 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

- Projects have an obligation to share concerns about children
- Sometimes monitoring children over a long period may build up the picture that they are failing to thrive. These concerns should also be reported as detailed below
- How to react and listen if children start to tell you something
- Concerns to be passed only to line manager and senior officer in visits

Contact Kids VIP for sample policies/forms etc.

3.21 HOW TO RECORD CONCERNS AND WHAT TO RECORD

As necessary factual information, and identify child, bearing in mind confidentiality and the Data Protection Act. In addition to a record in the prison accident book, there is a need for a separate play worker's report, in a Child Protection record book, which should be kept in a locked cupboard and not left lying around.

3.22 MANAGEMENT OF PLAY PROJECT

The prison may directly manage the play project, and the play coordinator directly employed. It may be run by a larger child-care organisation, or criminal justice voluntary organisation or by a small dedicated voluntary organisation. It is recommended that whoever is running the play area have, or soon develop and adopt, relevant policies and procedure notes

in place on the following subjects to ensure the smooth running of the play project, and to review them every two years:

Contact Kids VIP for examples of :

- Behaviour (discussed 3.15)
- Equal opportunities (discussed 3.18)
- Recruitment and selection including the rehabilitation of offenders and disclosure, application and reference forms (discussed 3.25)
- Volunteer Policy, description of volunteers' duties, agreement and guidance for volunteers
- Staff terms and conditions including job descriptions
- Expenses and leave
- Support supervision and training
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures for volunteers and staff (These may be different.)
- Confidentiality
- Child protection policy and procedures (discussed 3.13-321)
- Comments and complaints for clients and whistleblowing by staff
- Health and safety (discussed 3.15)
- Data Protection

CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT

To ensure the smooth running of a play service the prison and play coordinators are advised to agree a contract which sets out what each party expects from the other: services, resources etc. (This may be governed by the NOMS arrangements for working with the voluntary sector.) There also needs to be a communication policy to ensure that there are regular meetings, play coordinators are kept informed of developments in the prison, know who to contact in the prison, and in effect can be incorporated into the visits room team. *Contact Kids VIP for sample contract.*

FINANCE (DFE)

A number of play areas and coordinators' salaries are presently being financed by profits from the visits room tea-bar. This is money from prisoners' families, which is being recycled to benefit prisoners and their families. Occasionally there are small sums available in a general purpose fund. Some play projects are also funded by charitable donation, but this is not necessarily sustainable. Logically funding might be made available through the Department of Education (DFE) networks for prisoners' children, as vulnerable children. Maybe this funding will become available in the future. Many play projects are already funded by local network funds etc.

INSURANCE

There is no obligation on the Prison Service, as part of the Home Office and therefore headed by the Secretary of State, to effect employers' liability insurance for unpaid or voluntary workers and it does not do so. The Service carries the liability for accidents to its staff caused by negligence of the Prison Service. This also applies to volunteers.

If an individual is employed by a voluntary body and as part of their employment goes into prison that activity will be covered by employers' liability insurance, which is mandatory for all organisations. It is good practice for voluntary bodies to extend this insurance to volunteers.

Should a voluntary organisation (VO) send unpaid volunteers into a prison it is assuming some level of responsibility for their safety. If the VO is negligent and the individual suffers harm as a result of the VO exposing them to risk, then the VO will be liable although on the facts of each case the Prison Service may be liable as well in which case the award may be split between them. In such circumstances a VO might well wish to effect its own insurance cover for volunteers.

This means that play projects should provide insurance both for their workers and volunteers, to be sure that they could have some recourse. Many local Councils of Voluntary Service or volunteer bureaux will be able to inform play providers how to obtain suitable local insurance.

3.23 POLICY AND PRACTICE IN EMPLOYMENT AND STAFFING OF PLAY PROJECT (BOTH PAID AND VOLUNTEER STAFF)

Contact Kids VIP for sample contract, job descriptions etc.

PLAY COORDINATOR

More and more prisons are funding the employment of a qualified play coordinator. The advantages of this are that the play coordinator's job includes finding, training and supporting volunteers and ensuring the smooth running of the area. The visits staff usually find it helpful to have a contact point, and it is particularly useful if they can begin to start considering the play area coordinator as part of the team. Total reli-

ance on volunteers without a paid coordinator often results in a slightly less reliable service, and a volunteer coordinator is virtually irreplaceable, because the burden she/he carries is so great. The risk is that when she/he goes, so may the pool of volunteers. It is preferable to pay coordinators who should become part of the visit's team.

PLAY WORKERS – VOLUNTARY OR PAID

Projects will have to decide whether, to ensure they have two play workers at each session, they will be able to recruit volunteers or whether they need paid play workers for some sessions. Good practice means that for child protection reasons play areas should in general operate with two play workers. Projects should consider reducing the service if only one play worker is available, because lone play workers are at risk of false allegations. Specific agreement with and support of prisons is essential if play projects choose to operate with one play worker only; this should only occur where visits are very quiet (and two workers could not be justified, nor would the sessions be satisfying for them), and the play area is in a very visible location.

Volunteers as play workers are used successfully and extensively in some areas, working with a paid coordinator. Volunteers have particular needs and strengths. Kids VIP training can assist coordinators in working successfully with them.

A scheme to train and employ prisoners as play staff is under consideration at various prisons.

(3.23) RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

Projects will have to consider how to advertise, short list and interview. In seeking a play coordinator they should consider what, if any, qualifications they require: there are many recognised childcare and early years or youth and community qualifications.

Kids VIP is accrediting training for prison play workers, and pact has accredited training for prison support workers.

SELECTION AND SECURITY CLEARANCE

Good recruitment procedures of staff and volunteers should include some safeguards against appointing inappropriate personnel. In addition to the Disclosure checks described below.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 was created in response to recommendations in The Bichard Enquiry, which was produced after the Soham murders in 2002. These recommendations stated 'new arrangements should be introduced requiring those who wish to work with children, or vulnerable adults, to be registered.' A new body was created called the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) The scheme and the required checks were called the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) and have been subject to review by the Coalition Government. The outcome of the review has now reported which will result in a reduction of the scope of the scheme. In the case of those working with children there will still be a requirement to undertake a CRB Enhanced Disclosures. Changes will be included within the Protection of Freedoms Bill which will become part of a new barring regime in 2012.

UNDER CURRENT UK LEGISLATION, IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR ANY ORGANISATION TO OFFER WORK THAT INVOLVES REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 18 TO ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF CERTAIN SPECIFIED OFFENCES, OR INCLUDED ON LISTS OF PEOPLE CONSIDERED UNSUITABLE FOR SUCH WORK HELD BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

STANDARD DISCLOSURE

Also referred to as a Standard check. These are primarily for posts that involve working with children or vulnerable adults. Standard checks may also be issued for people entering certain professions, such as members of the legal and accountancy professions. The Standard check contains details of all convictions held on the PNC including current and 'spent' convictions as well as details of any cautions, reprimands or final warnings. If a position involves working with children, the CRB check will indicate whether information is held on new Barred Lists for both children and vulnerable adults.

ENHANCED DISCLOSURE

Also referred to as an Enhanced check. These are for posts that involve a far greater degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults. In general the type of work will involve regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of such people. This level of check involves an additional level of check to those carried out for the Standard CRB check - a check on local police records. Where local police records contain additional information that may be relevant to the post the applicant is being considered for, the Chief Officer of police may release information for inclusion in an Enhanced check. Enhanced disclosure will be required for all staff, play area co-ordinators, play workers and volunteers who are employed, contracted or sessional workers or anyone who will come into regular contact with children.

Projects must ensure that they adhere to the CRB Code of Practice, this is intended to ensure that information released will be used fairly and is handled and stored appropriately. The Code is available at the following website link <http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk/PDF/Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

WEBSITE

WWW.CRB.HOMEOFFICE.GOV.UK/PDF/CODE%20OF%20PRACTICE.PDF

Play providers should not confirm contracts for staff and volunteers until Disclosure Certificates are obtained, nor should they be permitted to work in the play area.

Play providers may have their own arrangements for obtaining disclosure, or it may be possible to obtain disclosure certificates through the prison.

Prisons may have an obligation to screen and provide disclosure certificates for all personnel working with children in prisons. Arrangements should be agreed locally.

(They will also have to decide how often to renew the checks; the minimum is every two years.)

Projects must ensure they keep CRB information appropriately according to Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

INDUCTION

All paid staff and volunteers need good induction.

Agreement to code of conduct (e.g. also include guidance, storage of personal belongings, identification of volunteers, using keys and dress code: in some prisons wearing tabards has been useful: they identify play workers, avoid problems with dress and provide a pocket for scissors, which can be attached to play worker.)

Photos should be taken and identification badges for play workers and volunteers be organised by the prison.

Child protection procedures must form part of training and not merely be handed to the new worker.

Kids VIP can assist with induction for new play coordinators .

Providing an induction/training period for volunteers may offer an opportunity both to ensure that they are aware of policies and that any anxieties they have about working in the prison environment are addressed.

SUPERVISION, SUPPORT, APPRAISAL, ACCOUNTABILITY

All volunteers and play coordinators need at least an annual appraisal however simple. Play projects should keep records of appraisal sessions, and give a copy to workers or volunteers.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR PLAY COORDINATORS

Kids VIP provides training and support for play coordinators. It runs regional meetings for play coordinators annually where there is a chance for networking, training, support and exchange of ideas. Kids VIP provides on-site training and support to new and existing prison play co-ordinators/volunteers tailored to their needs. *See 1.1*

Play coordinators will also find value in linking into other voluntary or children's work networks in their locality. They could operate a buddy system with local play providers, health workers etc

TRAINING FOR VOLUNTARY PLAY WORKERS

Adequate support and training for volunteers is essential. It is important that volunteers are prepared to make and keep to the commitment they give, and that their own needs are not so great that they get in the way of the task they are about to undertake. The work can be difficult, and play projects need to ensure that all volunteers understand policies and procedures and are able to adhere to them. Volunteers will also need training in the basics of Health and Safety and Child Protection issues, both at the induction stage and ongoing. The prison also needs to provide training relevant to working in a prison environment.

Play workers may also need training in how to manage children's behaviour; in particular children with attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) may need special treatment. Such a training session could also cover responses to the difficult questions children visiting prison regularly ask: *Where am I, What is this place?*

Kids VIP can offer accredited training for play workers

ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN VISITING PRISON

PRISON AND PLAY PROJECT JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

- Respect and partnership working (see 1.6)
- Contractual agreement
- Needs analysis of times play project required
- Agree siting and design of high quality play area, including storage
- Develop Child Protection policies and procedures and work together to implement them
- Health and safety (risk assessment and remedial action!) Infection control guidance
- Regular meetings
- Monitoring and developing arrangements to improve contact between children and their imprisoned relatives

PLAY PROJECT RESPONSIBILITY

- Recruitment training and supporting play staff, paid and voluntary.
- Respect requirements of prison environment
- Provide play at agreed times
- Providing stimulating and safe play equipment
- Good policies adopted, implemented and reviewed
- Recording of play sessions
- Insurance for play staff

Links into other under 5s, children and young people's local networks
Kids VIP support with all aspects

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

- Responsible for child
- Works with others to ensure child conforms to behaviour policy
- Toileting of child

PRISON RESPONSIBILITY

- Welcoming environment for children and other visitors.
- Funding for play project and /or volunteers expenses
- Training for prison staff, on customer care and impact of imprisonment on child Training for play workers on prison environment.
- Respond to need for maintenance in play area
- Consult and inform play workers about changes to visits patterns and procedures
- Thank play project volunteers
- Keeping a record of the number of children visiting
- Organising fire drills in visits

Conform to Prison service and NOMS requirements
Kids VIP support for training and development

3.24 HOW PRISON CAN THANK VOLUNTEERS

It is important that in addition to the play project, which must nurture volunteers with social gatherings and other ways of valuing them, prisons recognise the contribution volunteers make to the smooth running of visits. For this and other purposes the prison needs a link person with the play project. See 1.6 on partnership working. Here are some examples of how they can thank them:

Six- monthly meeting with food, Christmas parties, invitations to the Christmas carol concert, a volunteer appreciation day, sending volunteers a bunch of flowers and a card, prison pay for volunteers' party possibly with a governor, 3 monthly supervision meeting etc., annual tour of prison for plays workers (particularly for new volunteers as part of induction), opportunity to talk about changes and know who the governor is.

3.25 INFORMATION IN VISITS HALL FOR VOLUNTEERS ESPECIALLY ON "WHAT TO DO IF..."

There could be a checklist to assist play-workers to know what to do and who to contact if there are difficulties. This could be placed inside a cupboard door in the play area, so that a reminder is on hand. Examples of information:

Disruptive child, accidents..... list of who to contact, procedures list
Volunteers' information board

3.26 RECORDING

All play projects should keep records of each play session in a daybook. This will normally be on the equipment used, the number of children (possibly in sections according to age and sex) how the session went, play workers' comments and issues arising: The daily numbers can be analysed into monthly statistics which are useful information for funders. (Prisons should also (for fire purposes) independently collect numbers of children at each visit; play projects should respond to an identified need.)

3.27 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Need to review, monitor and evaluate the play service and check that all policy and procedures are still relevant, and change and improve them where necessary.

See 1.5 for child evaluation ,contact Kids VIP for visitor survey examples.

TO ENSURE GOOD DOMESTIC VISITS, PLEASE READ CHECKLIST AT START OF THE CHAPTER

section 4

CHILD CENTERED VISITS

Section 4:

CHILD CENTRED VISITS

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS AT VISITS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR FAMILIES OR CHILDREN TO ALLOW A BETTER QUALITY OF VISIT THAN IS POSSIBLE IN DOMESTIC VISITS

CONTENTS:

4.1 The prison has considered how it can offer child centred visits in some form.

4.2 The prison understands the reasons for child centred visits

4.3 In preparing for child centred visits the prison with the play project, if one is involved, has considered the following factors:

4.4 Planning, communication and consultation

4.5 Type of visit

4.6 Criteria/selection of prisoners to receive a visit from their children including security and child protection considerations

4.7 Security

4.8 Child protection – considerations and safeguards

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES BE CONSIDERED PRIOR TO THE AUTHORISATION OF CHILDREN'S VISITS.

4.9 Publicity, preparation, forms and administration

4.10 Date, time and programme

- Frequency – possibly offered at start and end of sentence
- Duration –times convenient -ideally weekend, holidays, half-terms
- Programme-needed

4.11 Venue

4.12 Health and safety including risk assessment of areas to be used

4.13 Equipment and resources, storage and setting up

4.14 Preparing for the children's needs

4.15 Refreshments

4.16 Funding

4.17 Staffing

4.18 Training

4.19 Carers-provision for them if they are not included in visit

4.20 Monitoring, evaluation and review

4.21 Considerations for prisons for women

KIDS VIP HAVE UPDATED AND EXPANDED MUCH OF THE MATERIAL IN THIS CHAPTER IN "HOW TO RUN A FAMILY DAY TOOLKIT" AVAILABLE VIA KIDS VIP WEBSITE

4.1 WHAT ARE CHILD CENTRED VISITS?

Child centred visits are specifically for parents and their children where children can be the focus of attention from their imprisoned parent, and usually take place in more relaxed surroundings than is possible in the normal visit room. There is some confusion about the different terminology used for different types of special visits offered in addition to normal domestic visits e.g. children's, family, extended children's, bonding visits (most often used for visits with newborn babies) as well as some family days (which normally include the wider family). Child centred visits can be organised on various different bases: for lifers, drug-free prisoners, alongside parenting courses, in preparation for resettlement. There is an immense variety, and the scope is large.

Some of the different types of visits:

- Prisoner and child only
- Prisoner, child and child's primary carer
- Prisoner, child and wider family (grandparents, etc)
- Children other than prisoner's own - e.g. partner's children, close niece/nephew
- Prisoner, child and legal guardian – e.g. social worker, foster parent

There has been a vast expansion in the numbers of visits arranged in addition to normal domestic visits, offering better quality visits. Research shows that these visits are much more beneficial to children than normal domestic visits.

I think it is excellent the way they have children visits; it gives the child and the father time to bond together and play together. It gives them more time together to have a bit of fun. Also I think that it helps the children show their feel

ing and brings out what they are thinking and feeling like last time I was on a children's visit my son had a nightmare and was crying in his sleep. But I think that was a way of letting his feelings out about his dad and know he has let it out so now he seems to be happy (parent of a three year old child visiting HMP Wormwood Scrubs).

Kids VIP have updated and expanded much of the material in this chapter in *HOW TO RUN A FAMILY DAY TOOLKIT* available via our website

WEBSITE

WWW.KIDSVIP.CO.UK

4.2 REASONS FOR AND PURPOSE OF CHILD CENTRED VISITS

- To promote bonding between parent/child
- To enable fathers/mothers to spend quality time with their children with the children being the main focus of their attention
- To strengthen the relationship between imprisoned parent and children
- To enable imprisoned parents to keep in touch with their children's development and be involved in creating positive memories
- To allow men and women to show responsibility and care for their children – these visits often contribute to improved self esteem and help parents look at their offending behaviour and its consequences for their children

- To prepare offenders for release by reminding them of the realities of parenting

- To help improve staff/prisoner relations – prison officers see the prisoner in his/her role as a parent, and the prisoner sees the prison acknowledging importance of family.

4.3 CONSIDERATIONS FOR OFFERING MORE CHILDREN CENTRED VISITS

There are a lot of factors to be taken into account in preparing for a visit; they are detailed below 4.4–4.12.

4.4 PLANNING, COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

Much of the success of these special visits depends on the planning of and preparation for how the day will be programmed. It is good practice to have a working party on these visits; this is likely to be most effective if it includes prisoners, prison staff, play workers and visitor centre staff. In some cases it can usefully also include a member of the Independent Monitoring Board, and Prison Education, which may be useful in providing resources. Because introducing carefully planned children's visits may be a long process there needs to be a planning schedule, which everybody understands. Planning meetings should also agree a list of responsibilities.

It is essential that child protection issues be considered prior to the authorisation of Children's Visits. *See section on Child Protection in Domestic visits 3.17 – 3.21.*

CONSULTATION

Everyone affected by a child centred visit, that is all stakeholders, should be consulted at the planning stage.

- With different departments within the prison, including:

Governors and senior colleagues

Probation Staff

Operations Group

Chaplaincy

Visits Staff

Voluntary Sector Coordinator

Prison Officers' Association

Wing Staff

Independent Monitoring Board

Health and Safety representative

Catering staff

- With prison play providers
- With participating prisoners and their families

Everyone should be offered the opportunity to comment on various aspects of the visit, (anonymously if they so wish). This will help to inform future planning and welcome and value the opinions of prisoners and their families.

4.5 TYPE OF VISIT

There are so many different types of visit (as detailed in the introduction above) and prisons need to decide what they want to offer:

- Whether carers will stay or not: (Provision will need to be made for carers if they do not stay, see 4.19 below). Some prisons only offer visits where the carer stays in the visit all the time. Others, particularly women's prisons, offer successful visits where the carer leaves.

- Whether it is to be a family visit, with a more general focus, or a child centred visit where the carer stays, which is specifically designed to improve the relationship between the imprisoned parent and the child/children.

- Who is responsible for the child at any given time if the carer does not stay?

4.6. CRITERIA/SELECTION OF PRISONERS TO RECEIVE A VISIT FROM THEIR CHILDREN

NUMBERS

On the basis of the venue and space available prisons will have to decide how many prisoners can be accommodated.

OTHER CRITERIA:

Ideally child centred visits would be available for all prisoners who wanted them, whatever regime in the prison they are on; they should be based on the children's needs but realistically where there are security breaches, prisoners would be denied access to these visits

- Security status, length of sentence and child protection should be taken into consideration.
- Selection of suitable prisoners should ideally be independent of any incentive scheme.
- Visits should only be denied where it can be proven that it is not in the best interests of/or unsafe for the child or others. For the protection of the scheme, it may be necessary to refuse the visit to prisoners with a recent poor security record.
- Priority should be considered for fathers with children in care, as this may be the only visit when they can see their children.

- Some visits are linked with a parenting course which is also a useful preparation for these visits, although some on the course will not be able to follow through with visits and some prisoners will do the course, but not engage with it, purely to get an extra visit. Therefore child centred visits could be linked to, but not dependent on attending a parenting course.

- Whether a prisoner is likely still to be in the establishment at the time of the planned visit. It can be very upsetting for the family if a prisoner is moved just before a scheduled visit.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Who is responsible for authorising/recommending participation? (Personal officers, principal officers, probation, security may all need to be included.)

- How will the selection be finalised if applications exceed the number of places available?

- Will the visit be in addition to the domestic visits entitlement?

- How often can each prisoner participate?

4.7 SECURITY IMPLICATIONS ARE DEPENDENT ON THE CATEGORY OF THE PRISON.

- The main responsibility for security is with the security department, and security procedures and identification will be as for normal domestic visits. However, allowances should be made for prisoners to be allowed to take pictures and other craft items back to their cells provided only appropriate resources have been used. (See resources below and at 4.7) There should be clarity and consistency

about which art works can go back to cells etc.

- Will prisoners wear their own clothes or their prison uniform?

- Many prisons have overcome security fears and offered these visits. If there are concerns, prisons can monitor phone calls in advance and afterwards. There is often prisoner peer pressure to keep these visits 'clean' and not to abuse them, in particular by bringing drugs in.

4.8 CHILD PROTECTION – CONSIDERATIONS AND SAFEGUARDS

See also sections 3.13 and 3.17

- Clear and consistent guidelines for implementing child protection throughout the process, including during the searching of children prior to the visit, (see 2.10).

- Prisoners identified as posing a possible risk to children by virtue of their offending history, current offence or charge or any other information should have been assessed.

- Prison staff may need to liaise with play providers involved in child-centred visits, especially if they are administering the forms for the child centred visits.

- If the visit is one where the carer does not stay throughout the visit, a clear decision as to who is legally responsible for the child during the visit, needs to be made and appropriate forms available and completed to ensure this responsibility is officially passed by the children's carers usually to the play project or the prisoner.

- Toileting issues need to be discussed. The planning process will also need to agree practical considerations such as which toilets are available for these visits, and whether visitors will need to be re-searched after they have been to the toilet etc. The parent carer who has brought the child must take the child to the toilet unless specific responsibility has been specifically passed to someone else in which case they must take the child to the loo.

- Systems for play providers to record relevant child protection concerns and information, which takes into consideration confidentiality and data protection, need to be in place.

See also section on child protection in domestic visits 3.8, which sets out child protection requirements for play providers.

4.9 PUBLICITY, PREPARATION, FORMS AND ADMINISTRATION

For the visits to work well they must be well advertised and their purpose clearly understood. Administration must be clear and efficient. The decision over who takes the lead must be clearly agreed, and who will process the applications, administer invitations etc.

PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

Child centred visits should be advertised on the wings and in the visitor centre. Visitor need to know who is eligible to attend.

Produce a leaflet(s) for prisoners and carers, which can:

- Explain the purpose of the visit, to prisoners and carers, and explain what they can expect from you and what you require of them.

- Give travel directions which should, where possible, include local transport details. Nearest station to the prison or bus service. Local taxi information.

- List local accommodation etc. (This is especially important around Christmas time when some people do not have enough money for a 2 day trip e.g HMP Dartmoor.) If visitors apply in advance, the governor can write to APVU requesting extra money for this visit

- Produce a leaflet for children with pictures showing what is available, and the rules and boundaries.

- Information to be sent to carer in time with APVU details.

PREPARATION FOR VISITORS AND PRISONERS

In addition to the written information, prisoners and their families need to be given an opportunity to hear about the purpose of visits and the dos and don'ts. In many establishments both parties make an agreement, which emphasises the focus on the child. This contract could be standardised across establishments.

FORMS

Application forms should be clear and easy to understand, containing details of children's names, ages, relationship to prisoner (e.g. son, step-daughter, partner's child), dietary requirements, name and address of accompanying carer. If unaccompanied, additional information needed: name, address and emergency contact number of children's primary carer; current health concerns; name, address and telephone number of children's doctor.

ADMINISTRATION

An agreed clear process is important in Administration

- When and how the forms should be returned and to whom.
- Clarity about whether the prison, and if so which department of the prison, or the play project or visitor centre, will process the forms, and inform prisoners and families when their visit is to be.
- A special invitation can be prepared for children eligible for these visits. Other administrative considerations would be to decide who pays for film and processing photographs taken on visits.

4.10 DATES (AND FREQUENCY) TIME AND PROGRAMME

DATE

Whenever possible aim for special visits to coincide with school holidays to cause minimal disruption to children's education. The frequency of the visit must be considered. It is better to start by offering fewer and then build up to a sustainable level.

TIME

Set a realistic time for the visit that will enable families travelling long distances to arrive on time and benefit from the full programme. Ideal times: 10.00 arrival for 10.30 start and concluding at 14.30 with the option of normal social visit if required. This would enable travel time either side of the visit, and is not so long that the children would get tired or lose interest.

The visit may extend over morning and afternoon, or be part of a day only. This may depend on whether families are local or travelling a distance. – ideally it will last more than 2 hours, but this requires scheduled activities. The designated venue may not be suitable for a long visit if only a limited range of activities can be accommodated. Prisons should offer flexibility for latecomers if they have genuine reasons.

Parent/child visits take place once a month (or more if necessary) and last 4 hours.

PROGRAMME

A programme for the day with times and activities scheduled is needed to ensure it runs smoothly and fathers are not left unable to cope with their children for long periods.

It is important always to remember that the purpose of the visit is for child-parent interaction. Any play provision is merely to support the visit, not to provide an alternative attraction. However play providers, prison staff and/or prisoners can set out a variety of activities for prisoners and children to undertake together.



Storytellers can be part of a prison visit

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

- Seasonal and other craft activities: Father Christmas, Easter egg hunt etc, cards.
- For active games such as football the gym if available may be useful to let off steam.
- Photographs and videos - consider the possibility of enlisting an authorised staff member to take family photographs, or videos so the child has a picture of whole family; if this is sensitively done need not show that it is a prison. (A nominal charge for photos could be donated towards cost of - e.g. craft materials, Christmas extras, etc.)
- An event which parents and children can enjoy together, e.g. storyteller (see details in supporting materials) or mime artist but only for part of the visit.

- Bouncy castle.
- Can have journey round prison to calm children after a few hours.

ALL ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE RISK ASSESSED

4.11 VENUE

All parts of the visit should ideally take place in safe, secure, accessible, adequate space with adjacent toilets with baby change facilities available.

Prisons have many options: initial meeting place in the main visits hall. The social (domestic) visits room and play area etc combined with the gym for physical activities have proved successful. Use of the chapel or multi-faith room is also possible, or in some prisons a designated area has been created for these bonding visits. The use of an outdoor area, weather permitting, would be an added bonus.

VISITOR CENTRE

If these child centred visits are scheduled for times when the visitor centre would not normally be open, if possible arrangements should be made for it to be open

4.12 HEALTH AND SAFETY INCLUDING RISK ASSESSMENT OF AREAS TO BE USED

Before child centred visits, prisons must risk assess all areas children (and carers) on the visit will pass or use with children in mind, and prepare a checklist for risk assessment. This is particularly important if a dual-purpose area is being used. It is important to inspect any intended venues to identify any possible risks to children. For example, toilet facilities, baby change area, hot radiators and piping boxed in, sockets in wall plugs, panic buttons, age appropriate resources to avoid choking or similar hazards, storage or cleaning materials, glue, scissors, and hot drinks.

Furniture or equipment may need to be removed to make venue safe e.g., tables with sharp corners in the main visiting hall.

Named and available First Aiders are necessary on the day. A First Aid box should be available in the area.

4.13 EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES, STORAGE AND SETTING UP

AGE

Appropriate equipment and resources should be made available; space may dictate what is practical.

Consideration should be given to gender, ethnicity and any special or additional needs of the children visiting.

Appropriate resources could include:

- A variety of art and craft materials and rolling programme of activities for different ages
- Toys for imaginative play, (telephones, dolls, tea sets and play food)
- Puzzles for different ages, but not too many pieces as this may take too much time
- Construction toys
- Small world garage with cars or similar
- Pencils, crayons and felt pens suitable for different ages
- Children's scissors, dependent on category of prison, will need to be supervised and counted at the beginning and end of each visit
- Children's aprons to protect clothing
- Toileting needs – supply or check visitors can bring nappies with them

STORAGE

Needed to ensure that resources for the purpose can be kept safely, and be available for each successive visit.

SETTING UP RESOURCES FOR THE VISIT

It is important to consider and agree in advance who will get out and put away equipment and resources. (Prisoner parents can take more responsibility as parents if they are involved with setting up and clearing away.)

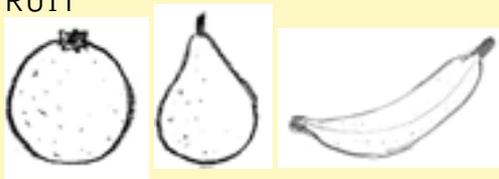
figure 2: RECOMMENDED FOOD AND DRINKS

RECOMMENDED

SANDWICHES



FRUIT



SOUP



CHEESE



FRUIT JUICE



WATER



NOT RECOMMENDED

BURGERS, FAST FOOD ETC



CHOCOLATE, CAKE, SWEETS ETC



CRISPS



SOFT DRINKS



4.14 PREPARING FOR INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S NEEDS AT THE VISIT

It is important to know in advance about any special needs visiting children may have, and plan accordingly for them. The application form should reveal medical requirements, if applicable, prior to visit. e.g. asthmatic children, childhood illnesses and allergies. The prison would expect carers to monitor carefully the benefits to children of the visits (and look out for any behaviour changes). If the children are feeling the impact of imprisonment particularly or they have previously rarely had contact with the imprisoned parent, play workers and prison officers may be able to give additional support to their visit and their prisoner parent.

4.15 REFRESHMENTS

It has become normal practice that the children and their parents have some food and drink together, sometimes partially funded by the prisoner (no coke or other food which may make children become hyperactive). Some prisons provide high quality refreshments and fruit at all visits. Religious, cultural and dietary requirements need to be specified on the form and taken into consideration, if necessary, in consultation with the Imam or Chaplain. (Food containing nuts and large amounts of sugar and salt are best avoided.)

Visitors need to know whether babies' bottles will be prepared on or off site. The time and place where refreshments will be served should be agreed and staff allocated to supervise this. Children must be kept away from hot drinks at all times.

4.16 FUNDING

A budget needs to be considered for the effective running of special visits, which will cover the cost of materials, food, nappies, play workers' hours etc. as necessary. In some cases these costs will be met out of existing visits' budgets, in some cases additional allocations/fundraising will be necessary. Some prisons ask prisoners to make a contribution towards the food.

4.17 STAFFING

There needs to be an adequate ratio of prison personnel and voluntary sector play workers in a supporting role but they should not take responsibility away from the prisoner parent.

Suitable prisoners could be screened and selected to support the visit. This could contribute to a vocational qualification within the childcare sector.

Officers should be positioned to allow the prisoners and their visitors to have some privacy. They may require training to understand the different needs in child centred visits.

In many prisons the staff working on child centred visits wear alternative clothing such as polo shirts (such as those worn by physical education instructors) or their own clothes rather than prison uniform to reduce the intimidating aspect of the visit. Play workers and prisoners assistants could wear tabards or tops of different colours.

4.18 TRAINING

Accredited training for a designated staff team for officers clearly identified as and/or play workers is available from Kids VIP and might be a useful preparation for these visits:

Day 1: Impact of Parental Imprisonment on Children.

Day 2: Safeguarding Children in the Prison Environment.

Day 3: The Importance of Play.

Day 4: The Role and Qualities of a Play Worker.

Day 5: How to Run a Family Day.

4.19 CARERS - PROVISION FOR THEM PARTICULARLY IF THEY ARE NOT INCLUDED IN VISIT

Prisons should give carers relevant information in advance of the visit, allowing time for any queries to be answered. They should also inform carers of any restrictions regarding personal belongings. If smoking is to be permitted, visitors need to know when and where. Those organising the visit should encourage carers to bring a change of clothing for young children and any specific items they may require for children's care, e.g. nappy creams, special wipes.

If carers are part of the visit they need clear information both written and given personally so that they understand that the focus of the visit is on the child.

HOW CARERS' NEEDS WILL BE MET (IF THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE VISIT) AND MUST THEY STAY ON SITE?

Preparation needs to include thinking about what carers will do during the visit while the prisoner has a visit with their child and about when the children will be returned to them. It is usually better if carers stay on site, possibly in the visitor centre, so there is no risk of the children being left or waiting distressed for their regular carers to resume their care.

For possible provision for carers during special visits see 2.8

SOME PRISONS ALLOW THOSE WITH MOBILE PHONES TO LEAVE THE PRISON PREMISES

Others would not. (A left child policy is essential to cover the eventuality of children being left at the prison, which has been known to occur.)

4.20 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- It is important that all participants and prison and play staff give their feedback on the day, and the team responsible review the visits and make appropriate changes.

DEBRIEFING

For prisoner after the visit could be jointly with the partner, or for visitors and prisoners separately. Debriefing offered after the visit for the young offenders before going back on the wing.

EVALUATION

A chance to offer comments on the visit -should be offered to all prisoners, visitors and children. *See 1.5 for further information on children's evaluation.*

ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING UP EXTENDED CHILDREN'S VISITS

Planning and consultation required
before - then good information and good
administration for them to work smoothly

VENUE

- Security
- Child friendly
- Toilets
- Space
- Accessibility
- Risk assessment

CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

- Multi-agency approach
- Reporting procedure
- Keeping records
- Agreed with play
play project

SECURITY

- Searching children
- Strip search of inmates
- Contraband
- Use of visiting order
- Presence of staff
- Contract

MULTI- DISCIPLINARY INPUT

- Prison service
- Probation
- Social services
- Play workers

CHILD CENTRED AND FAMILY VISITS

FREQUENCY/ DURATION

- Suitability for
families
- Prison timetable
- Programme for
whole period

PROVISION FOR CARERS

- Refreshments
- Support group
- Venue

INMATE CRITERIA

- Adjudications
- Mandatory drug
testing
- Remand/convicted
- Security status
- Contract

AFTERWARDS

- Monitor
- Evaluation forms
- Support group
- Debriefing
- Review

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

175g (6oz) of support and co-operation from staff and governors.
5ml (1 level teaspoon) of a suitable venue
200g (7oz) of and accessible play coordinator
15ml (1 tbs) of good play equipment
150ml (1/4pt) good liaison with Visits team

Mix the above in a large bowl adding clear information for families, staff and inmates.

Now, on a surface dusted with play leaders and volunteers, knead in some eligibility information and personal interviews for prisoners

Place the contents of the bowl on a preheated oven tray and sprinkle on some family support.

Bake in the oven at 200 Celsius(gas mark 7) for 15-20 minutes (being vigilant to avoid abuse). Serve hot with good publicity, evaluation and feedback.

Reproduced by kind permission of Toby Stewart, previously play leader @ HMP Everthorpe.

4.21 WOMEN

There is an even greater need for child centred visits for children of women prisoners, who are more likely to have been the primary care givers prior to imprisonment. Difficulties arise because of the smaller number of women prisoners and prisons for women mean the distances to visit may be even greater.

Visitors to women may not be familiar with the child they bring: they may be social workers, or more distant relatives.

There is also more often a need for special visits to women prisoners prior to permanency arrangements being made for children, whom the authorities have decided it is not in the children's best interests to have further contact with their mothers. Prisoners receiving these visits need particularly sensitive handling and support before, during and after them.

TO ENSURE CHILD CENTRED VISITS ARE WELL PLANNED PLEASE READ CHECKLIST AT THE START OF THE CHAPTER AND CONSULT KIDS VIP TOOLKIT

section 5

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

section 5:

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

DEVELOPING OTHER CHILD AND FAMILY FRIENDLY WAYS OF WORKING

THIS CHAPTER OFFERS A TASTE OF OTHER SERVICES OR ACTIVITIES PRISONS AND VOLUNTARY OR COMMUNITY AGENCIES HAVE OR COULD INTRODUCE TO PROMOTE BETTER FAMILY TIES.

UNDOUBTEDLY IF FAMILIES AND OFFENDERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FEEL AT EASE WITH THE PRISON AT THE START OF THE SENTENCE, IT IS LIKELY TO BE LESS DAMAGING

CHECKLIST:

5.1 Your prison/project/community has considered introducing other child and family friendly ways of working in the following areas:

5.2 At the start of imprisonment

5.3 Different visits

5.4 Other methods of communication

5.5 Education and other courses

5.6 Visits or courses linked to resettlement / preparation for home leave and home detention curfew (HDC)

5.7 Other prison based ideas

5.8 Projects with children in the community, outside any prison environment

5.9 Good Practice in other countries

5.1 DEVELOPING FAMILY AND CHILD FRIENDLY WAYS OF WORKING

This is an area of welcome growth and the list here is not comprehensive. There is immense scope for projects to normalise family life from prison and maintain and improve family relationships.

Some general points:

- Good visits underpin all other activities. Unless families' experience of visits is good, prisons will have to work harder to involve them in other initiatives.
- Publicity is key to the success of schemes; it is important to ensure those prisoners' visitors and families are made aware when they are eligible to participate, and that any administration is clear and smooth.
- Action for Prisoners' Families have been encouraging family friendly initiatives and have published newsletters focusing on these projects

WEBSITE

WWW.PRISONERSFAMILIES.ORG.UK FOR MORE INFO

5.2 AT THE START OF IMPRISONMENT

Undoubtedly if families and offenders are encouraged to feel at ease with the prison at the start of the sentence, it is likely to be less damaging and more easily managed.

INDUCTION FOR FAMILIES

This may take the form of induction meetings with videos and presentations with a chance to ask questions, or prison visits attached to an additional meeting for families, or an informal individual induction for new visitors on a question and answer basis.

FIRST NIGHT IN CUSTODY

A project to assist women entering prison for the first time. Link workers will meet individual women, to assess their mental health needs and find out what help is required with practical issues, such as concerns for their children.

www.prisonadvice.org.uk

FAMILY SUPPORT WITHIN THE PRISON

Some prisons have family link or family support workers or family contact or liaison officers who can act as a point of contact and support for prisoners' families and a bridge to support available for them in the community.

LISTENERS

Trained by Samaritans, are available in some prisons for prisoners who have just arrived in prison.

5.3 DIFFERENT VISITS

Flexibility to provide extra visits for people with special needs e.g. can't make regular visits in a wheelchair, parent's work at weekend etc.

HOMEWORK CLUB

Where children can come in after school and do homework with prisoner fathers.

ENHANCED FAMILY AREA WITHIN NORMAL VISITS

An area of the larger visits hall has been designated an enhanced family area with more child and friendly seating etc.

FAMILY DAYS

Where larger numbers of family members can visit. These visits may involve use of the prison chapel (provided there are no religious objections), and the gym etc. These may be linked with cultural days when family can come into prison such as Black History Month, Ramadan etc or outside fun days.

FAMILY FETE

Where prison staff and their families as well as offenders and their families can enjoy a day out with stalls, bouncy castle, etc. This is easier at a more open prison.

FAMILY BARBECUES

Held outside on a Sunday once or twice a year and spaces booked by prisoners.

CHILDREN COMING TO STAY AT THE PRISON

There are some schemes to allow children to visit for a few days with their prisoner mothers.

HOME AND TOWN VISITS

Known as, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). For many low category prisoners or those nearing the end of their sentence these can be easier than visits at the prison, and saves the family from having to travel and experience the prison environment again. However they can also be stressful unless both family and prisoner are prepared for them.

CHILD FREE VISITS

On one night a week a crèche service is provided in the visitor centre so that the entire visit is childfree and parents have a chance to visit as a couple knowing their children are safe. These quieter visits are also valued by those without young children.

ESCORTED VISITS

For looked after children or others whose family do not bring them to prison. This work needs clear and separate protocols for escorts and could be linked to a contact centre. APVU is available for these visits. Relais des Enfants offers this service nationwide in France.

5.4 OTHER METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Apart from physical visits, and the more obvious letter writing and telephone calls, there are other ways for prisoners to communicate with their families.

- **Storybook dads.** Prisoners make a tape or video for children to see/hear the prisoner reading a bedtime story. The reading agency, local libraries and the book trust offer opportunities which can be adapted for prisons.
- **Video visits.** A video link from a local public library for families to connect with their imprisoned parents.

5.5. EDUCATION AND OTHER COURSES

Many prisoners are not aware of the impact of imprisonment on their children, nor how to maintain their relationships with their children and partners. For many prisoners these courses can be a turning point.

- **Parenting and relationship courses.** A range of these is offered both by the Offender Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU). Some involve just the prisoner and others the whole family.
- **Family Learning courses** have been very successfully implemented through Offenders Learning and Skills Units (OLSUs or prison education departments).
- **Prison radio** used to promote responsible parenting,

5.6. VISITS OR COURSES LINKED TO RESETTLEMENT / PREPARATION FOR HOME LEAVE AND HOME DETENTION CURFEW (HDC)

Ideally resettlement should start at a point of arrest. In addition to looking at their employment and skills, for successful resettlement, offenders need to have good family relationships. Somewhat less than half of all prisoners are thought to lose touch with their families during the sentence, and roughly a fifth of prisoners' marriages are thought to break up. The issues for their child/ren on resettlement should be considered. Some pre-release work, with offenders and their families, could be done at the visitor centre.

- **Education or courses** as above specifically linked to resettlement. There have been successful relationships courses with visits related to resettlement.
- **Extended visit** as part of sentence planning or resettlement meeting on visits, with a special visits entitlement. It is normal in young offender institutions to have the family involved in resettlement meetings. Thought needs to be given as to what the children will do during these meetings.

5.7 OTHER PRISON IDEAS

One governor has the vision that families should be assisted to operate as far as possible as normal families, even though one member is in prison. To this end a family centre has been established within the prison to be accessed by prisoners and families and involving other agencies who may be able to offer services.

5.8 PROJECTS WITH CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY, OUTSIDE ANY PRISON ENVIRONMENT

While the focus of this file has been children visiting prisons, as noted in 1.3, imprisonment has a significant impact on offenders' children in the community. The DFE now recognises the need for support and resources for prisoners' children in the community.

- Increasingly efforts are being made to provide support to children with imprisoned parents through community resources and to raise awareness amongst those providing services to children of the impact of a parent's imprisonment on them. Prisons should seek to make links with children's services in their local communities.

- Home-Start assistance for families affected by imprisonment.
www.home-start.org.uk

See also additional uses for visitor centres at 2.21

5.9 GOOD PRACTICE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Prisons may find inspiration in the extensive good practice elsewhere, in Canada, Australia, Northern Ireland, Scotland and throughout Europe, particularly in Scandinavian countries and Slovenia where Eurochips is a European wide network working on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. See Canadian Prison website http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/visit/index_e.shtml

WEBSITE

WWW.CSC-SCC.GC.CA/TEXT/PBLCT/VISIT/INDEX_E.SHTML

WEBSITE

WWW.EUROCHIPS.ORG

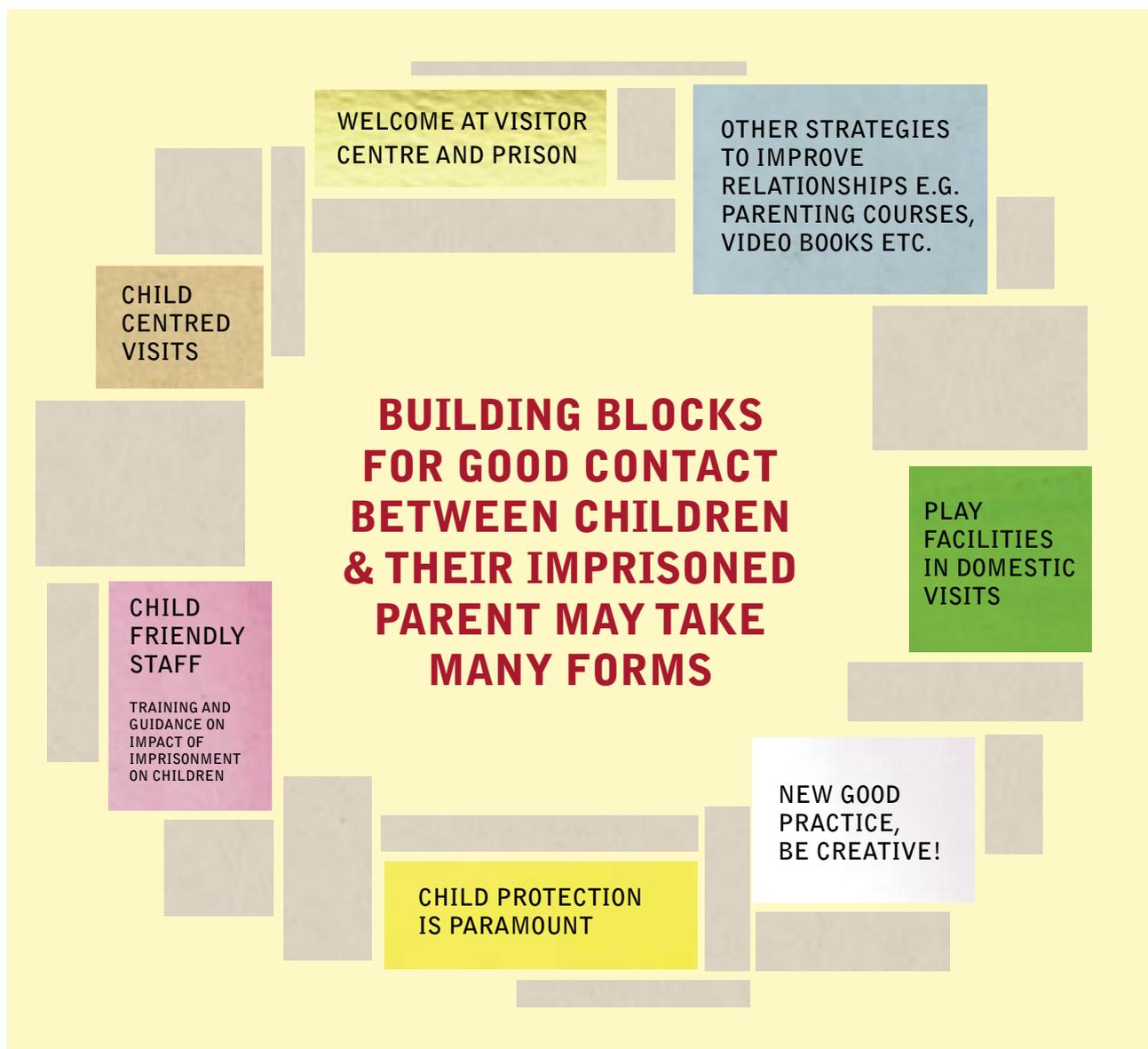
5.10 OTHER FAMILY FRIENDLY WAYS OF REDUCING THE HARM TO CHILDREN CAUSED BY IMPRISONMENT

Taking family into account when sentencing. Some jurisdictions take account of offenders' family circumstances and child care responsibilities when sentencing; this can lead to deferred, suspended, weekend or no custodial sentence being passed (e.g. in South Africa, Slovenia, Bosnia).

Children and prisoners both benefit from experiences of normal family life. Child and family friendly ways of working contribute to this normality.

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE:



Index of Main Themes

Assistance with travel costs	1.3,2.7
Assisted prison visits unit	1.3,2.7
Behaviour policy	3.13
Booking visits	2.4
Child centred visits	section 4
Child centred visits	3.13, ff,2.19,4.8
Children's rights	1.4
Closed visits	3.12
Criteria for prisoners for child centred visits	4.6
Disclosure	3.18
Drugs as a problem for prisoners' families	2.18
Evaluation by children	1.5
Evaluation of children's visits	4.2
Extended children's visits	section 4
Facilities for children in visitor centre	2.17
Family days and visits	section 4
Financing/funding play areas	3.12,3.22
Gate reception	2.9
Health and safety for child-centred visits	4
Health and safety in prison visits rooms	3.15
Home detention curfew	5.6
Identification	2.6
Information for children,	1.3
Information for parents/carers	2.3,1.3,3.8
Insurance for play projects	3.11
Kids VIP advice and training	1.1,1.6, 3.3,4.18
Legal requirements of play area	3.11
MAPP	3.16
Needs analysis	3.7
Other countries-good practice	5.18
Partnership working	1.6,3.24
Play area in prison visits	3.6-3.26
Play coordinator	
-job description,contract etc.	3.26
Play equipment in prison visits	3.12
Play project management	3.22
Policies for play project in prison visits	3.23
Policies for visitor centre	2.19
Prison visits rooms ambience	3.2
Programme for child centred visits	4.1
Recording concerns	3.23,
Recording play sessions	3.26

Refreshments in child centred visits	4.15
Refreshments in prison visits	3.5
Resettlement	1.2,5.6
Safeguarding children	3.13, ff,2.19,4.8
Searching of children	2.1
Timing of visits	2.6
Toilet arrangements in visits	3.4
Training for visitor centre staff	2.15
Travel to prison	2.7
Visitor centre	2.11-2.21
Women in prison	1.9,4.21

Additional comments to second edition 2011

Since the first edition Kids VIP have been delighted at the use that has been made of this guide in improving visits for children. This web version to accompany the 2011 Visits PSI validates the hard work by many people, prison personnel fulfilling different roles in the service, play workers and others across Britain who have worked to have the needs of prisoners' children recognised and to meet them. I hope the new PSI will promote yet more child friendly arrangements in prisons. The children of prisoners are also punished when their parents are sentenced.

Positive prison officer attitudes towards prisoners and families make far more of a difference to prisoners 'children than additional resources, though these can contribute. In Norway, the prison wall round Bergen prison is in the shape of a heart; the area manager Lief Waage says: "staff should show respect and be decent and cheerful. Remember the heart walls. Our culture is to exhibit vitality and care for the inmates and their families; to show love for our work "

About the author:

Kate Philbrick O.B.E., was joint national co-ordinator for Kids VIP 1996-2005 and has been both vice chair of Families Outside in Scotland and president of EUROCHIPS. From a legal background she is also a member of the children's panel in Glasgow. Kate has worked providing and promoting play for children in visits in Barlinnie Prison since 1987.

Work on promoting and developing play areas started in 1988 after Fiona Clarke won a Butler Trust award. Kids VIP (a charity since 1993) is now recognised as the authority on good practice in prison visits for children. Funded primarily by charitable grants and donations, it works constructively with the Prison Service and other organisations, in children's best interests, to improve their contact with imprisoned relatives. The Kids VIP team have relevant training qualifications and development experience. Their work is to assist prison staff and play projects. Please contact them.

Acknowledgments and thanks

Things come and go and we hope this guide will contribute to creating sustainable, high quality arrangements for children and families who visit across the prison estate. Each section of the guide will be dated to show when it was last updated to be as accurate as possible. It is not an academic work: please contact Kids VIP for assistance with more detailed references.

I would like to thank the Baring Foundation for funding the publication of this work, NOMS and the Prison Service for commissioning it, and all those who helped compile and develop it through consultation meetings and with comments. I have used material, discussions and advice from many different establishments and organisations and am very grateful for this sharing of good practice.

I thank too authors, children, visitors, officers, play workers and others who have contributed to developing play areas over the past 25 years. I am grateful to the trustees at Kids VIP for their encouragement and support. Even writing a book of this sort has required immense patience and love from my family, which I appreciate greatly. Ned Anderson the designer has been very helpful and constantly encouraging throughout the process. Any errors are my own.

I owe most particular gratitude to Fiona Clarke who created Kids VIP and who has been a wonderful colleague and a constantly supportive companion in our work.

We hope that this document will prove helpful, and as a result there will be better quality visits for children visiting prisons.

Kate Philbrick for KIDS VIP



CHILDREN VISITING PRISONS

This guide was commissioned by the Prison Service to promote, expand and inspire good practice across the prison estate in welcoming children and families into prisons. This will benefit:

CHILDREN

who may already be suffering from the effects of the imprisonment socially emotionally and financially and are themselves at risk of becoming offenders. All children anywhere need child friendly facilities.

PRISONERS

who are more likely to resettle successfully if they can maintain or improve the relationship with their family. Prisoners are parents and need opportunities to be good parents even from prison.

PRISON STAFF

who can work constructively with the family to assist the prisoner.

THE COMMUNITY

at large - we all benefit from a more inclusive settled society, with less offending.

This user-friendly guide is for PRISONS, PLAYWORKERS AND ALL THOSE INVOLVED WITH CHILDREN OF PRISONERS. It provides examples of good practice, checklists on how to achieve good visits and aspirations for further developments. It is the starting point...

