



## Safer Custody Learning Bulletin

### Issue 27: Engaging Families or Significant Others with ACCT Case Management

#### Who needs to see this Bulletin?

All Senior Managers, Regional Safer Custody Leads, Safer Custody Teams, Security Managers, Reception / First Night / Induction Staff, Visits Staff and Healthcare Staff.

This bulletin explains the benefits of involving families or significant others\* in the ACCT case management process for those at risk. Offenders who have a positive relationship with their family, can benefit from access to this additional source of compassion and support, and this can help to reduce distress and improve mental wellbeing.

Offenders may confide in their families if they have fears for their safety, or if they feel they are at risk of self-harm or suicide, and it is important that we facilitate the reporting of such information.

#### Actions for Prisons

##### ACCT Case Managers

- Ask the person you are case managing if they would like a family member to be involved in their care and obtain their written consent to do so.
- If agreed, sensitively approach the nominated individual, explain your role and seek their help in supporting the offender.
- Ask families what support has worked in the past for the person being case managed (if relevant) and where possible involve those providing this outside support when developing the CAREMAP.
- Keep both offender and family member informed of all developments.
- Consider inviting families to attend case review meetings, in person or via teleconference, or to contribute in advance by phone or email.
- Arrange regular conversations with them so that their views are included.
- Be aware of agencies that can support offenders and their families in maintaining contact. **Annex A** is a list of some of the agencies available.

##### Visits / Safer Custody Staff

- Put in place a process for families and other visitors to be able to share risk information about an offender at any time with a dedicated contact point at the prison.
- If a concern about an offender is reported, record it, take appropriate action and record what you have done.
- Ensure that anybody (staff member, visitor or other offender) who raises a concern receives an acknowledgement and reassurance that appropriate action has been taken.

## Why should you engage families with the ACCT process?

It really is worth investing the time to ask someone who is being managed under ACCT whether they would like a family member to be involved in their care and boost their support. If you have the offender's consent, you can then share relevant information with them. **Offenders' families may be in a better position to know when something is really wrong with their loved one and when any improvement is real.**

Families can offer an insight into what support has worked for that person in the past. Where consent is given, you should retain a copy of the written agreement in the offender's records. If the offender is reluctant, explore their concerns with them and explain the benefits to them, whilst being respectful of their feelings.

### Case study:

An offender attempted suicide, triggered by a breakdown of his relationship and concerns for his step-father who was ill and required care. The risk of a repeat attempt was very high, and was managed using constant supervision for a long time. With his permission, the ACCT case manager arranged that she would update both his step-father and his partner after every review.

After the initial crisis had passed he was encouraged to contact his step-father and partner by telephone under supervision, and as he made progress visits were facilitated at which his case reviews were discussed. Unfortunately the step-father became too ill to visit, but family visits from his partner and children were facilitated. The ACCT was closed before the offender's release on licence, and he is now back living with his family.

## How should I get families involved?

The family may have been in contact with other departments, such as chaplaincy, healthcare or probation, so it is best to obtain relevant information from all members of the ACCT multi-disciplinary team before contacting the family.

Approach the nominated individual sensitively, explaining your role in supporting the offender. Provide reassurance about the action that is being taken by the prison to ensure that they are safe.

Consider inviting the family member to attend ACCT case review meetings, either in person or via teleconference. If this is not possible, arrange regular conversations with them or keep in touch by email so that their views are included and they are informed of any developments. Involve them when developing the CAREMAP.

Be aware of agencies that can support offenders and their families in maintaining contact. **Annex A** contains a list of some of the agencies available.

## Supporting those on ACCT without family involvement

Of course for some, contact with their family might increase the likelihood of self-harm or suicide. Care must be taken to ensure that contact with family is appropriate and safeguarding considerations have been taken into account. Equally, some offenders may have no support from their family. Alternative support throughout the ACCT process can be provided by:

- Listeners, peer support workers and Samaritans (by telephone or in writing)
- Prison Visitors and the Prisoner Penfriend scheme.

## **Further information**

[PSI 2011/64 - Management of Prisoners at Risk of Harm to Self, to Others and From Others](#)

[Safer Custody Learning Bulletin Issue 14 - Receiving Emergency Calls: facilitating the sharing of risk information by families, Samaritans and others](#)

Safer Custody Learning Bulletin Issue 26 - Promoting Safety in Prison by Strengthening Family Ties (this can be found on the safety page [here](#) under the learning bulletins tab)

[Understanding Risk Guide](#)

*\*References to the word 'family' also includes the support of close friends and significant others.*

## **Safer Custody Policy & Learning Team**

### **Safer Custody & Public Protection Group**

More information on suicide and self-harm prevention is available [here](#) on our safety page and also on the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's website, [www.ppo.gov.uk](http://www.ppo.gov.uk)

**Contact us: [SaferCustodyPolicyandLearning@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:SaferCustodyPolicyandLearning@noms.gsi.gov.uk)**

## Maintaining Family Contact: Support Available

There are various organisations that can provide support to prisoners, families and staff.

Organisation Name	Description	Contact
Action for Prisoners & Offenders' Families	Action for Prisoners' and Offenders' Families works for the benefit of prisoners' and offenders' families by representing the views of families and those who work with them and by promoting effective work with families.	020 7553 3080 <a href="http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk/">http://www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk/</a>
Prisoners' Family & Friends Service	Prisoners' Families and Friends Service (PFFS) provides practical help for prisoners' families.	0808 808 3444 <a href="http://www.pffs.org.uk/">http://www.pffs.org.uk/</a>
Offenders Families' Helpline	Provides support to families on all aspects of arrest, court and prison including information and support about visiting family members in custody.	0808 808 2003 <a href="http://www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org/">http://www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org/</a>
PACT	PACT supports people affected by imprisonment. They provide practical and emotional support to prisoners' children and families, and to prisoners themselves.	0207 735 9535 <a href="mailto:info@prisonadvice.org.uk">info@prisonadvice.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/">http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/</a>
Partners of Prisoners (POPS)	POPS provide information and support to the families of offenders from their earliest contact with the criminal justice system, through to release and beyond.	0161 702 1000 <a href="mailto:mail@partnersofprisoners.co.uk">mail@partnersofprisoners.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk/">http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk/</a>
Prison Reform Trust	PRF run an advice service for prisoners which can give information on various issues including family contact. <b>The service is for prisoners only.</b>	0808 802 0060 Prison Reform Trust FREEPOST ND 6125 London EC1B 1PN <a href="http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/">http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/</a>

Organisation Name	Description	Contact
Barnardos	Provides support to the children of prisoners and run IHOP (Information Hub on Offenders' families with children for Professionals) is a one-stop information and advice service to support all professionals in working with children and families of offenders, including frontline staff, strategic managers and commissioners.	0208 550 8822 <a href="http://www.barnardos.org.uk/">http://www.barnardos.org.uk/</a> <a href="http://www.i-hop.org.uk/">http://www.i-hop.org.uk/</a>
National Association of Official Prison Visitors	Prison visitors are volunteers who offer friendship and support to prisoners whilst they are in custody.	<a href="mailto:info@naopv.com">info@naopv.com</a>
Prisoners' Penfriends	Prisoners' Penfriends offers a highly-supervised mail forwarding service at no cost to prisons. The service allows people in prison to have regular contact with a trained volunteer outside, encouraging a sense of belonging and connection with society. It can be particularly helpful for isolated prisoners who do not receive social visits, providing a chance to write to a penfriend instead.	<a href="mailto:gwyn.morgan@prisonerspenfriends.org">gwyn.morgan@prisonerspenfriends.org</a>
Bridging the Gap Penpal Scheme	Bridging the Gap offers advice and help to people wishing to write to prisoners and currently oversees over 3,000 penpals.	020 8090 1486 <a href="mailto:info@btguk.org">info@btguk.org</a> <a href="http://www.btguk.org/index.php/home">http://www.btguk.org/index.php/home</a>
British Penpals	British Penpals run a scheme for emailing US and UK prisoners.	British Penpals 36 The Kings Gap, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 1HF United Kingdom
Pics2Prisons	Pics2Prisons is a personalised postcard service, which keeps prisoners connected with loved ones.	<a href="http://www.Pics2Prisons.com">www.Pics2Prisons.com</a>