



Family and Significant Other Strategy Report 2021

2021 posed challenges for everyone keeping in contact with their families. The restrictions in place to prevent the spread of Covid 19 has meant we have all gone weeks without seeing loved ones. This has been reflected at Ashfield whereby the first 4 months of the year we were closed for visits. Luckily with modern technology we have been able to utilise video calling as an alternative to Social visits by using the "Purple Visits" system. Unlike other prisons whereby a 30-minute call was offered to the prisoner, Ashfield set up 1 hour time slots with no cost to families, this was subsidised by the prisoner's trust fund. During this period, to encourage prisoners to call home we also gave them 10 free minutes of phone credit a day (increased to 15 minutes on bank holidays) that would roll over to the next day if unused. We have also worked with "Email a Prisoner" to enable a digital reply system to make 2 way contact easier.

Social Visits were stopped around Christmas of 2020 and restarted 16th April 2021. Initially contact wasn't permitted and it was vital that the 2-meter social distancing rule was adhered to. As restrictions changed throughout 2021, we were able to allow contact between prisoners and visitors which required a negative lateral flow being provided upon entry. We opened the visits hall Cafe serving food and drinks, and we allowed the removal of face coverings once sat at the table. Prison Visitors from the Newbridge foundation also re-started visiting those that don't receive visits from family and friends. To ensure that our visitors felt safe with the way visits are delivered we have completed an ongoing survey around the procedures in place to prevent the spread of Covid 19.

In November 2021 Visits looked as if it was returning to as close to normal as it could with Covid 19 still around. Visitors and prisoners commented on how good it was to be able to have a visit with a bit of food and drink and have a hug at the beginning and end of the visit. Unfortunately, in December 2021 there was a Covid 19 outbreak at HMP Ashfield and we had to re-introduce restrictions in our visits hall to ensure the safety of everyone. As we end 2021, we now find ourselves in a position whereby all visitors coming into Ashfield must provide a negative lateral flow test, but contact can resume.

During 2021 we have started a new initiative with the "Children's book project" charity. HMP Ashfield is the first prison to work with them to design and pilot the book gifting scheme for



prisoners' children. On Monday 14th June, we held a gifting event in the chapel where the prisoners that are permitted contact with their children attended and could choose a book for each child as a gift. They were also able to write a letter, send some stickers and a bookmark. It was a great day with lots of positive feedback. Overall, we managed to send out 52 books for children and we had 6 new signups to story book dads. We now have a "Children's Book Project" Book hut in our family visits room and every time a child visits, they can sit and read a book with Dad and take a book home with them for free.

Our first family day was scheduled for 21st December. Santa was booked to attend, and the Quakers chaplain had organised presents to be bought for all the children. Our safer custody team had an arts and craft stand prepped to go and we had a face painter booked, unfortunately this has had to be cancelled due to the outbreak, but we will reschedule a family day as soon as we are able to in the new year. All prisoners signed up will automatically get offered a place on the new date.

During 2021 we have established a Family and Significant Others strategy meeting. This is an interdepartmental meeting every other month to talk about what we are doing across the establishment for families and how we can improve what we offer. We have developed a live action tracker to track the development of any actions set from the meeting. We also use this meeting to analyse visits to track our progress of face-to-face contact between prisoners and their significant others.

Unfortunately, FACT (Family at the centre of throughcare) visits were suspended throughout 2021 but our keywork team created a bi-monthly newsletter to those signed up to FACT to ensure contact remains between the prison and the prisoner's family. Although FACT has been suspended, providing the prisoner has consented, families have still been invited to contribute towards the case management process.

The Interventions team have continued to deliver Horizon and Kaizen. Both programmes teach prisoners a range of different skills which are important in terms of improving interpersonal relationships. Skills taught include problem solving, emotional management and resolving conflict. Both Horizon and Kaizen are strength-based programmes which support motivation to resist from offending and to assist individuals in building constructive and protective relationships with family and friends. We also completed a needs analysis to ensure we are meeting the learning needs of our prisoners with a view to offer them courses that are both suitable and



beneficial outside of their offending behaviour courses, one that we considered was a parenting course however at present this was deemed unsuitable.

During 2021 a new child safeguarding policy has been written and all Serco staff at Ashfield will receive annual child safeguarding training. There has been a Family and Significant other intranet page set up where staff can go to access policies and information should they need it.

HMP Ashfield have also been doing some work in the community with CAPO (Children affected by parental offending). CAPO is an organisation that are working to support families whereby a child has a parent in prison. HMP Ashfield are developing some resources to go into the CAPO toolkit for families and we have identified 5 CAPO champions on site that will be trained to help and support families and signpost them to the relevant support services. They will also be able to help prisoners understand what support is available for their families.

During 2021 we have identified that at HMP Ashfield there currently isn't any training available to staff about understanding the needs of a prisoner's family. To rectify this, we have secured funding to work with a Family consultant to design a training package for staff called "Think Family". This package will be designed specifically for Ashfield and can be delivered to all staff across site so that they have a better understanding of what families go through when they lose a loved one to prison and it will give them the confidence to deal with a prisoners' family or significant others.

We have completed a Family survey where 53% of prisoners engaged. This helps us to better understand prisoners' priorities when it comes to families and significant others and see where we are doing well and what we need to improve on.

Overall, during 2021 HMP Ashfield took some big steps forward with our Family and significant other strategy by raising awareness across the establishment and making it an operational priority for all departments to engage with. We now look forward to 2022 to further improve what we have started building on.

George Rayment- Custodial Operations Manager 28.12.2021