**The Families and Significant Others Strategy**

**HMP Wakefield**

**February 2024**

**HMP Wakefield**

Welcome to HMP Wakefield. HMP Wakefield is a long term, high-security prison for Category A and B prisoners. We are situated very near the city centre at 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 9AG. HMP Wakefield has a long history and was first built as a house of correction in 1594. The famous nursery rhyme “Here we go round the mulberry bush” is thought to have started here when it is said female prisoners used to dance around a mulberry bush with their children to keep them entertained. A mulberry bush is still present on the site and is both the emblem of the prison and the name for our specialist autism unit.

At the present time HMP Wakefield houses around 750 prisoners with up to 160 being Category A, the highest security category. The purpose of the Prison Service is to protect the public and help people lead law abiding and positive lives. It is our vision here at HMP Wakefield to be a prison where people feel safe and secure within an integrated population. We are committed to working together to support prisoners to develop a sense of hope and positive identity. Our Family and Significant Other Strategy is an important part of this aim.

HMP Wakefield has specialist units each with their own visiting arrangements. Visits are on the same days as published visit sessions however visits are taken in other areas of the establishment. The prisoners located on those units can apply and have access to the family days visits however these would be facilitated in a bespoke way.

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**Introduction**

At HMP Wakefield we are committed to providing a place of safety and reform for our prisoners. We understand that creating a stable environment and the chance for prisoners to positively change their behaviour and turn away from a life of crime is essential. We know that their families or significant other people in their lives are an indispensable part of this process.

We recognise the value of supporting a prisoner to develop meaningful and constructive relationships with their family or significant others and this will be a major focus for our activity. Family and significant other relationships are considered to be a key means by which we can minimise reoffending. We consider this to be both our moral and ethical responsibility.

For many prisoners’ family relationships can sometimes be non-traditional and are not limited to simply parents and siblings. They may involve other family such as aunts, uncles or grandparents. For others, like care leavers, this may be somebody who provides a statutory service, a close friend or associate. As a result, we will try and accommodate wider “family” arrangements where they provide a positive and supportive relationship for the prisoner and their family.

We appreciate that staying in touch and visiting can be difficult for families and that having a loved one in prison can be distressing for them and for children in particular.

With this in mind we want to make sure that we communicate openly and consult widely to ensure that we provide services to prisoners which will help them develop their ties with family and significant others.

We want families to feel that they can positively contribute to the positive progress of their loved ones but also contribute to the prison understanding the needs of families better and making them feel involved, welcome and supported. Our Families and Significant Other Strategy is designed to do this.

The lead for the family and significant others at Wakefield is the Head of Reducing Reoffending Chris Lindsay, and our champion is Custodial Manager Steve Brown who is based in the operations function.

**Getting in touch**

Getting in touch with a prisoner is not always easy. You can check online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) which contains a lot of useful information about how prisons work.

You cannot make a phone call directly to a serving prisoner, they will normally contact you. However, if you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a prisoner at HMP Wakefield can call the Switchboard on 01924 612000 and ask to speak to the Safer Prisons Department or in an emergency ask for the “control room” who will immediately pass your concerns to the “Orderly Officer”, the person operationally managing the prison.

You can also call the Safer Prisons Helpline on 0800 389 1108. Leave a message giving as many details as possible including the prisoners name, prisoner number and what wing they are located on if you know it. If you wish, you can leave your own details and a contact number so the prison can give you feedback, if appropriate.

It is constantly monitored between 08:00am and 5:00pm and messages are retrieved once during the night.

**Staying in touch**

Staying in touch is really important for the wellbeing and welfare of the prisoner and their family and friends. You can get in touch in a wide variety of ways.

* Letter
* Telephone
* E-mail-Family and friends can send e-mails to prisoners using [www.emailaprisoner.com](http://www.emailaprisoner.com). Prisoners can write back using the answer service.
* Voice Mail-the prison pin phone system can be used to leave a voice mail and collect replies using [www.prisonvoicemail.com](http://www.prisonvoicemail.com)
* Video Visits (previously known as Purple visits) - this enables visitors to book a video call with family members and is really useful when visiting is difficult due to distance, work commitments or illness for example.
* Domestic Visits

**Travel**

**By Car:**

**From M1 South:** Proceed north along M1 to Junction 40. After approx. 2 miles turn left at Henry Boons Public House into Parliament Street, just before the railway bridge.

**From M62:** Proceed along M62 east or west to junction with M1. Take M1 south to junction 40. Leave at Junction 40 along A638 towards Wakefield. After approx. 2 miles turn left at Henry Boons Public House into Parliament Street, just before the railway bridge.

**From A1 North:** Proceed along A1 south to M62. Proceed along M62 Westbound to M1. Proceed along M1 southbound to Junction 40. Leave at Junction 40 along A638 towards Wakefield. After approx. 2 miles turn left at Henry Boons Public House into Parliament Street, just before the railway bridge.

**From A1 South:** Proceed along A1 and A1M and leave A1M to join A638 towards Wakefield. Follow signs Dewsbury A638. After crossing roundabout at Comet, get into the right-hand lane and turn right at the end, across the dual carriageway (Westgate). After approx. 100 yards turn left at Henry Boons Public House into Parliament Street, just before the railway bridge.

**Train:** The train station closest to the prison is Wakefield Westgate, and the prison is about a 5 minutes’ walk away. Coaches run by National Express stop at the nearby Wakefield Bus Station

**Domestic visits**

Domestic visits are a fantastic opportunity to help maintain and develop the close family ties which will help prisoners progress positively and enable families to feel part of the process. They can provide the foundation for a prisoners’ successful return into the community at the end of their sentence.

Visits are available on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons between 2.15pm and 4.15pm. Currently, the visit’s booking line is available between 9.00am and 12.00pm from Monday to Friday and between 2.00pm and 4.00pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. The Visits Booking Line telephone number is 01924 612274. You can also e-mail socialvisits.wakefield@justice.gov.uk. There is also the option of online booking by visiting [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

We work closely with the charitable POPS, Partners of Prisoners, who will welcome you into the Visitor Centre and provide hot and cold drinks and snacks. They also operate the tea-bar in the Visits Hall inside the prison. In addition to their role in visits POPS offer a wide variety of services for prisoners and their visitors. You can find out more about them on [www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk](http://www.partnersofprisoners.co.uk) or contact Debbie Seddon on 01924 612165. The visitor centre is only open on visits days from 12.45pm until visits end.

In addition to normal domestic visits, we hold monthly Family Days which are typically longer, between 10.00am and 3.00pm. They are designed to have a more relaxed environment with activities and food provided. They may be themed for children, older prisoners, young adults or as celebration events for example. An annual timetable is published on the intranet or alternatively is available from the Visitors Centre. Attendance at these events may involve meeting set criteria linked to risk and public protection. However, they will not be linked to the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme, being of Enhanced regime will not be a criteria.

The remaining dates are as follows:

* 21st February Neuro Diverse
* 20th March Lifer
* 10th April Childrens
* 22nd May   Over 50’s
* 19th June Adults
* 24th July Lifer
* 21st August  Childrens
* 18th September Over 50’s
* 23rd October Adults
* 20th November Non-visits family day
* 18th December Childrens

**What to expect when visiting**

Visiting a prison can be daunting, especially if this is your first time, or you have young children. We do our very best to ensure the experience is as relaxed as can be, and the nature of a prison means there will be some level of search.

When you arrive at the visitors centre you will be met by a member of POPs, who will take your name and ask you which prisoner you are visiting. They will then give you a card with a number on it – it is important you keep this card so when the booking staff call your number you do not miss your slot. You will be called through by your card number to the visits booking staff, who will enter your details on the computer, confirm ID documents, and identify you as a visitor – you may be fitted with a paper wrist band or have an ultraviolet ink stamped on your hand. There are lockers available to store your items (*REMEMBER, phones and electronic items are not permitted in the prison!*) and a small selection of refreshments will be available. You are free to leave the visitors centre, as long as you are back by the time the entry process starts. Please speak to a member of POPs who will inform you of the time on the day. Once the visitors centre staff are instructed, they will ask for groups of visitors to make their way up to the prison, and this is decided numerically. It is a short walk from the visitor’s centre to the prison gate.

When you enter the prison gate area, you will be met by experienced staff who will guide you through the search procedure. You will be required to remove certain items such as coats/jackets, belts, shoes etc. and these will be placed in a tray, which will then be x-rayed by staff. You will then head through our portal and will be wanded with a metal detector and rub-down searched by a member of staff. Female staff can search both males and females, but males can only search males. If you have any religious requirements, please speak to the search staff, who will inform the gate Manager, and a side room can be facilitated. Staff will explain to you what they require, so try not to worry. Once the search has been completed you will move through to the dog search area, where a member of staff with a ‘sniffer’ dog will walk the dog past you. Again, the staff member will discuss the process with you. Once the dog you will be asked to place you finger on a small sensor which will confirm your identity, give you your table number and then finally you’ll head into the main visit hall. This process usually takes around 5-10 minutes.

When visits have finished you will be asked to make your way through to the visitors holding room, and once the visits Senior Officer has accounted for all prisoners, you will be free to leave. The exit process is usually quicker, and you will be asked to place your finger on the small sensor, to confirm your identity, before being directed through into the gate search area and out of the establishment.

There is a requirement for 10% of visitors to be subject to an exit search. This is conducted at random and is an extremely important part of our security processes and does not take a lot of time to complete. Please ensure that if you are selected for such a search, you fully comply with the procedure as a failure to do so may result in a visits ban being applied.

**Supporting the Family and Significant Other Strategy**

* **Keyworker** - Every prisoner has an identified keyworker who has one to one meeting with them to discuss all aspects of their time in prison. Family relationships, behaviour, sentence plan, health, in short, all aspects of a prisoners’ wellbeing. Where possible it is very helpful for the family to know who the keyworker is and how they can be involved.
* **POM** - Every prisoner has a Prison Offender Manager to support them in completing their sentence plans and progressing towards release. Families can be an extremely positive part of this process.
* For those at risk of self-harm or suicide an **ACCT**, Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork, is opened to support them. With the prisoner’s authority our Safer Custody Team may contact the family of a prisoner in distress for them to be involved in how the best support can be offered. In some cases, this may involve family coming to the prison to attend reviews.
* The chaplaincy provides both religious and pastoral care for prisoners, but they also work closely with families. The team can help arrange marriages and are involved in providing support as a result of illness or bereavement.
* We have a close working relationship with Wakefield’s armed forces covenant to support our veterans and have regular coffee mornings/events.
* We operate a scheme with the **National Association Official Prison Visitors** where prisoners with little or no outside contact can arrange to have a visit with an **Official Prison Visitor**.
* **Storytime Family** - The Library can help prisoners read a book for their child/children which will be recorded, and a DVD sent to the family.
* POPS can help visitors apply for the **Assisted Prison Visits Scheme** which provides financial help towards the cost of visiting for those on a low income to enable visits to take place.
* POPS help to identify prisoners who do not get visits and arrange to meet them to discuss how they may like to progress.

**The Future**

Coffee mornings will continue to take place monthly basis and are a great way to get a better understanding and insight into the roles of other staff from other areas in the establishment. They will be attended by the Christine Lindsay, Family and Significant others Lead and/or Steve Brown F&SO Champion and Stu Nutting Head of Operations. Coffee mornings will also include representatives from other areas of the prison and may be requested, for example Security or Safer Custody. All visitors are welcome to attend and contribute ideas to improve current practices or concerns.

The remaining dates are scheduled for:

* February 23rd
* March 29th
* April 26th
* May 31st
* June 28th
* July 26th
* August 30th
* September 27th
* October   25th
* November 29th
* December 27th

**What else are we doing?**

We are always looking to expand and develop the Family & Significant Others strategy. Here are some of the other things we are currently working on:

* A visitor with children will be asked to complete a Visitor Centre to Visits Hall review with a DVD Recorder to identify what the visits experience is like for families and suggest how we can make this a more positive experience them.
* The Family Strategy is discussed monthly at the Prisoner Council as an agenda item, so prisoners have a chance to contribute and get feedback on the action plan.
* Meetings between the establishment and POPS take place monthly to review the Visits Contract and service delivery.
* Recent Visitor and Prisoner Surveys have taken place and feedback will be used to strengthen and improve the F&SO strategy and the visits experience as a whole.
* Additional provision will be made for Care Leavers and Young Adults as we appreciate, they may have very different experience of supportive relationships to others. We are looking to appoint a Care Leaver Champion and train Advocates, prisoner representatives, on each of the wings to provide advice and support.

Please check out the following website for any further information:

**https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wakefield-prison**

We look forward to welcoming you to HMP Wakefield soon!