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**HMP Guys Marsh**

**Families and Significant Others Strategy**

**2025/26**



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Signed: Niall Bryant A black circle with a few circles

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**AIMS AND PURPOSE**

At HMP Guys Marsh, we believe it’s important to help people keep close to their families and friends while they are here. We know that having family support can help people make positive changes.

* **Staying close to family**: Keeping in touch with family makes people feel safe and supported. It helps them feel confident about making better choices.
* **Helping children and parents**: We encourage parents in prison to stay connected with their children. This helps children feel supported and can make school and home life easier for them.
* **Supporting young people**: We know young people and care leavers have different needs. We work with them to make sure they get the right kind of help and planning for the future.
* **Supporting everyone**: Some people might not have family to stay in touch with, so we help them build strong friendships and connections with others who can support them.

1. **OUR VISION**

We want to recognise and support the important role of families and close friends of people in custody. We know they help with positive changes and can make a big difference. By keeping strong family connections, we can create a safer and more supportive prison environment.

HMP Guys Marsh is committed to these main principles:

* We will treat families and close friends with respect, kindness, and dignity.
* Provide a safe, welcoming, and neutral space for visits.
* Offer opportunities for families and close friends to keep meaningful relationships.
* Encourage families and close friends to have a say in certain parts of the prison sentence.
* Work with other organisations to create a supportive, joined-up system.
* Follow all laws and rules to protect families and prisoners.
* Ensure strong child protection policies are in place.
* Create and display a Visitors’ Complaint Policy.
* Engage with families and close friends in a thorough and supportive way.

1. **PRISONER FAMILY LEAD & CHAMPION**

The main role of the Family Lead and Family Champion is to help build strong, healthy relationships between prisoners and their families or close friends.

* The Family Lead is **Sofie Tolley,** and the Family Champion is the Reducing Reoffending Custodial Manager.
* The Family Lead/ Champion will attend both prisoner and family forums to ensure feedback from prisoners and their Faso’s is contributed towards action plans.
* The Family Lead/Champion work to make visits better, keep connections with important partners, and link with support services like OMU, the Chapel, charities, and other helpful groups.
* The Family Lead/Champion do this in partnership with PACT, our family support provider, and listen to the views of families and close friends.
* The Family Lead/Champion support prisoners with Family related curriculum, improving their family ties.

The Family Lead / Champion’s goal is to create more opportunities for families and loved ones to stay connected.

1. **FAMILY PROVIDER – PACT**

HMP Guys Marsh works with a charity called **PACT** (Prisoner Advice and Care Trust) to help families and friends stay connected. PACT provides the following support services:

* **Play Worker**: A friendly person who makes a safe place for kids to play when they visit their family members in prison.
* **Visitors’ Centre**: A welcoming place where families can get information and support, especially if the visit feels hard.
* **Website**: A site with information about visiting the prison. You can find it at [www.prisonadvice.org.uk/hmp-guysmarsh](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/hmp-guysmarsh).
* **Family Engagement Worker**: A full-time helper who supports families and people in prison by connecting them with organisations that offer advice and help.
* **Family Group Activities**: PACT runs a parenting course called **Parent Gym** to help parents in prison learn new skills.

1. **TRAINING**

We will make sure that our approach to training our staff is dedicated and thorough and make sure that we are able to respond to provide a quality service. The types of training that our staff are undertaking include.

* **Family Support Services (through staff briefings)**
* **CAPPI awareness training**
* **Child Protection and Safeguarding**
* **First Aid**
* **Equality & Diversity**

Awareness of services, resources, and information to support offenders and their families and significant others.

1. **Emergency Contact**

**If you have a concern that there is an imminent risk of danger to a person in our care and you wish to speak to a member of staff to raise this concern, then you can call the switchboard:**

**01747 856 400**

**The member of staff who answers the phone won’t be able to talk about the person we’re caring for, but they will quickly share your concerns with a senior team member who can help. We try to handle any issues right away during the call and will let you know what happens next.**

**If you are worried about the safety or well-being of anyone we are caring for at Guys Marsh, and there is no immediate danger, you can leave a voicemail message for the Safer Custody Team at:**

**01747 856 452 (Mon-Sun)**

**This voicemail service is checked numerous times a day. Alternativly, you can use the Safer Custody mailbox:**

[**SaferCustodyGuysMarsh@justice.gov.uk**](mailto:SaferCustodyGuysMarsh@justice.gov.uk) **– Monitored Mon-Fri.**

**If you do not want to speak to anyone over the phone, then you can complete a safer custody contact form on the Prisoner’s Family Helpline website and someone from the safer custody team will pick this up within 72 hours-**

**(Go to HMP Guys Marsh @ Gov.uk - Concerns, problems and complaints to find the online form)**

[**https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/forms/hmp-guys-marsh-safer-custody-contact-form**](https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/forms/hmp-guys-marsh-safer-custody-contact-form)

**Additional contacts:**

* [**familysupport.guysmarsh@justice.gov.uk**](mailto:familysupport.guysmarsh@justice.gov.uk) **– Monitored Mon-Fri (working hours) and replied to within two working days.**
* [**guysmarsh@prisonadvice.org.uk**](mailto:guysmarsh@prisonadvice.org.uk) **– Monitored Mon-Fri.**
* **Prisoners’ Families Helpline: 0808 808 2003. Available 24/7.**

1. **MONITORING**

To see if our strategy is working well, we will collect feedback and information from different people, like prisoners, their families, and visitors. Here’s how we’ll do it:

* **Before Visits:** We’ll have surveys and meetings to gather thoughts and ideas in line with PACTS survey schedule.
* **During Visits:** Families and visitors can fill out feedback sheets to tell us how things went.
* **Prisoner Feedback:** Each year, prisoners can share their thoughts on family services in a big survey.
* **Special Groups:** We’ll ask for feedback from people who don’t get visits and from those who are in minority or disadvantaged groups.

**Monitoring:** The Family Champion (the person in charge of family programs) will complete checks to ensure the programme is working, usually during the Family Strategy meeting which takes place monthly. They’ll get help from PACT, staff, and the Visitors’ Center. Here’s what they’ll track:

* **Visitor Numbers:** We’ll count how many people come to visit to ensure the capacity meets the demands.
* **Requests for Help:** We’ll track how many people ask for help or advice and track themes in requests, from there we can implement targeted practices to improve the FaSO provision.
* **Feedback from Prisoners & Families:** We’ll listen to feedback from prisoners and their families and contribute this towards action plans to improve the service.
* **Complaints:** We will resolve issues raised from prisoners or their families.
* **Family Relationships:** We’ll monitor family relationships and ensure that every cohort receives support where required.
* **Meetings:** We’ll have monthly meetings with PACT and others to talk about what’s working and what needs improvement.
* **Inspections:** Groups like His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons will visit to check on us.
* **Improvement Plan:** We’ll use all this information to make changes and improvements where needed.
  1. **MONTHLY WELL-BEING VISITS**

Well-being visits happen in the visits hall at least once a month. We try to have twelve visits each year. Each visit has a fun theme, and we make sure to include teenagers and older children so that everyone feels part of the experience. PACT organises these visits, with help from other areas in the prison. Each time, up to eighteen families might be invited, depending on how many people can attend.

We also try to plan a special, longer visit for people with official visitors, like personal advisors or official prison visitors.

Amanda D’Abo, the PACT Family Engagement Worker, is based in the prison and the visits centre. She and other PACT helpers are there to support children, families, and friends who visit, making sure everyone feels comfortable and welcome. PACT has also created resources to help families, like a booklet for first-time visitors, a booklet just for children, and more information on other support available.

PACT also offers one-on-one help and a group course called Parent Gym for parents at Guys Marsh. They organise sessions to help people keep strong family connections and prepare for returning home. PACT also works with other organisations, like schools and social care, to support families and make sure everyone has the help they need.

* 1. **VISITOR CENTRE**

The visitor centre is a place that is welcoming and warm and where information is provided to ensure that all families have a good understanding of what is available to them and what to expect during a visiting experience.

* 1. **VISITS HALL**

The visits hall will maintain a high standard of cleanliness. The area will be bright and welcoming, and the notices or posters will not emit negative messages.The set-up of the visit’s hall will be always maintained.

**Domestic & Social Visits - Friday to Sunday 2pm- 4pm.**

You can book visits by phone or online:

* **Phone Bookings**: Call 01747 856586
* A room with blue chairs and tables

  Description automatically generated**Monday – Thursday**: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
* **Friday**: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm
* **Online Bookings**: Visit the GOV website to schedule a visit.

If needed, you may qualify for financial support for your visit. For more information, visit [www.gov.uk/help-with-prison-visits](http://www.gov.uk/help-with-prison-visits).

The Friends of Guys Marsh Charity may be able to help with transportation from the train station, including arranging a taxi and covering the cost. Contact the Family Engagement Manager or Family Champion before your visit to arrange this support.

**10. VISITS STAFFING GROUP**

HMP Guys Marsh has a visits staffing group who understand the needs of families and significant others and are regularly trained, as recorded earlier. These staff are professional in their approach and are able to build up good purposeful working relationships with those in our care and the important people in their lives. Our staff will be friendly and welcoming and will look to support the needs of families and significant others and prisoners to make sure that the visiting experience in HMP Guys Marsh is of a very high standard at all times. The staff will be placed in the right places to receive visitors at the correct times. The expectation will be that visitors will be allowed into the hall earlier than the people they are visiting in order for drinks and snacks to be purchased, but more importantly that there is no delay on the start time that in turn has the potential to affect the length of time for each visit to take place. Video visits are available for those that have difficulties in travelling. Help and guidance is available for all visits processes through the MOJ website, NICCO or PACT family worker. Voicemail and e-mail a prisoner are available to support communication with significant others.

1. **CHANGE GROW LIVE – FAMILY WORKER**

Change Grow Live provide family services as part of their provision for those with substance misuse problems and have a dedicated family liaison officer, Marie Dobson. The CGL Family service is designed to support prisoners who are currently working with the CGL services for their substance misuse. They support development of skills that will help them to stay connected to family/significant others whilst in prison. Support is offered through one-to-one key working sessions tailored to an individual’s specific needs and goals exploring issues in a group setting and in cell packs focused on specific skill development in better maintaining relationships.

The Family service can also help with:

* **Developing skills to learn how to stay connected to family/significant others whilst in prison.**
* **Developing parental skills and capacity through 1:1**
* **Support in processing loss & living with separation.**
* **Support with developing skills for reintegration back into the family pending release.**
* **Liaise with organisations in the prison cantered on reconnecting families/social networks**
* **Making referrals to organisations to further support specific needs**

1. **RESETTLEMENT**

We recognise the opportunity for resettling prisoners in custody in the most appropriate and supportive way. We invite families and significant others to be part of this process throughout a prisoner’s custodial sentence. Prisoners at 12 weeks prior to release are invited to discuss resettlement and are offered reintegration support. This is through: -

* **OMU – Keyworker, Prison Offender manager, Community Offender Manager, Social worker**
* **ISMS family worker**
* **Inside Talking parenting discussion group**
* **PACT Parent Gym**
* **Care Experience/Young Adult SPOC – Personal Advisor(s)**

We check that prisoners are comfortable with their release plans at 4 weeks prior to release and meet with any relevant parties in the departure lounge on the day of release.

1. **YOUNG ADULTS & CARE EXPERIENCED**

We know how important it is to give consistent support, especially to prisoners who have been in the care system. When they arrive, it isn’t always clear if they were in care, so staff are asked to inform OMU, the Family Champion, and OMU SPOC. This way, we can make sure they get full support.

We assign a personal advisor to each person up to age 25, and we do regular check-ins to see if they need help with education, training, or welfare.

Every quarter, we have a "Care Experienced/Leavers" forum for both staff and prisoners. The Diversity and Inclusion team collects data to improve support and training for staff.

We’re also working on support for Young Adults and have a training program for Keyworkers to deliver "Choices and Change." The young Adult SPOC Is Annie Le’Gresly, Programmes Manager. We’re adding more support options through the Induction and Resettlement processes, and we now have a peer mentor for Family/Young Adult/Care Experience.

Lastly, we’re partnering with the Rees Foundation to add more support as part of our action plan.

1. **CAFCASS**

Cafcass safeguards and promotes the welfare of children in family law proceedings. Cafcass has a duty to, wherever possible, undertake telephone risk identification interviews with the adult parties before the first hearing. Cafcass practice is to set telephone appointment times in advance, according to their adviser’s availability. Telephone interviews between Cafcass and Prisoners are permitted allowing incoming calls from official bodies and the Courts. This is arranged by OMU and The Family Champion as point of contact.

We now supply information for the Prison Advice Service which supports prisoners and their families through many difficult processes including court hearings. Telephone – **0207 253 3323**

1. **DRUG STRATEGY & DEBT MANAGEMENT**

The new Drug Strategy supports family involvement in the Restricting Supply, Reducing Demand and Building Recovery. Families are also invited to Recovery Days run by our substance misuse team and to assist in processes such as ACCT, CSIP and PPSIP reviews. All Prisoners are given the opportunity to involve their families & significant others in any reviews that take place to support their progression and wellbeing. There is a dedicated family’s worker within CGL who provides additional individual and group support for families and addiction.

Debt is supported through the Debt Strategy and Safer Custody and includes Family support as a priority and supports encouraging those in our care and families to work together to understand debt, budgeting and planning for the future.

1. **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

HMP Guys Marsh prides itself on supporting fair and equal processes, recognising and understanding the complexities of cultures and environments on the many different aspects of family life and the value of including significant others.

1. **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

HMP Guys Marsh collaboratively works with external agencies to support Prisoners and families cope with factors which have exacerbated relationships such as mental health issues. NHS OXLEAS and CGL work as part of the Family Strategy to involve families and significant others in the care and management of those with complex issues. PACTis currently working with Programmes to deliver ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) trauma-based training.

Below are some of external partners that support Guys Marsh in the work delivered regarding families:

* **Friends of Guys Marsh:** Support Prisoners with funding any release goals regarding employment etc. They also fund the family extended visit days and the minibus for visits.
* **Story Book Dads:** This is an opportunity for individuals to send out recordings to their children for them to listen to at home.
* **Homework club:** This is an ad hoc activity which takes place in the library. Weston can help you regain confidence to stay in touch with your children’s education and offer book relating to different Key Stages so you can see what you child is studying.
* **PACT support with a variety of projects:** - Selfie project, external virtual family forums, memory books, view of child photo project, twitter updates, individual and group work.

1. **CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT**

HMP Guys Marsh encourages positive engagement with projects that will support reducing the risk of reoffending. Celebration events encourage families to reinforce the benefits of Education and Vocational achievement, positive work ethics and recovery from substance misuse. It is an opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their commitment to change and to their reintegration into the community with their families and significant others.

1. **FOREIGN NATIONALS**

Work is being completed to support those with Family and Significant others who are not located in the United Kingdom. There is consideration of time zones, and international pin costs. A recent pay bonus has been introduced to support with financial assistance of foreign nationals exceeding their sentence end date. More links are being sourced to support with queries around deportation and release to foreign countries.

1. **IMPROVEMENTS TO PROVISION**

We are committed to continuously improving the Families and Significant Others provision. To achieve this, we gather feedback and ideas through several channels, which inform and enhance our provision:

* **Family Strategy:** A monthly Family Strategy meeting brings together multiple departments across the prison to discuss actions, feedback, and ideas for improving the provision.
* **Family Forums:** Twice a year, PACT and the Family Lead or Champion participate in Family Forums. These forums provide families and significant others with a platform to share feedback, ideas, and examples of good practice.
* **Families and Significant Others Action Plan:** A dedicated action plan specifically focused on the Families and Significant Others provision is monitored by the Family Lead. This ensures that actions are implemented efficiently and in a timely manner.
* **Family Reps Weekly Meeting:** The Family Lead conducts weekly meetings with Family Representatives to gather feedback from the wider community. These meetings are often also attended by the Family Engagement Manager.

1. **CONCLUSION**

HMP Guys Marsh is committed to creating an environment that has families placed right at the heart of what we do. It is important to us that families and significant others play a pivotal role in changing the lives of the people who find themselves in our care. We want to learn from families and significant others, so we are better placed to care for people here and are more able to adapt to the varying needs of these people. Families for too long have been ignored as important and influential agents of change, their support and continued responsibilities as family members to those who are incarcerated cannot be ignored and must be recognised as the “golden thread” that runs through the processes in prisons. We should be confident that their involvement can in the most cases be very positive and create opportunity for them to do that must not be ignored, we must encourage, appreciate and depend on their crucial involvement.

A policy on a page is available to view the strategy at a glance and be quickly informed. A measurement tool is also available to identify need and measure progression. This is regularly updated to reflect change and circumstances.

Monthly Family and Significant other meetings are held with key stakeholders. An action plan is reviewed to encourage and measure improvements in engagement with family and significant others.