



**HMP Durham**

**Family & Significant Other Strategy**

# Family Strategy

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| **Version** | 1.0 |
| **Date published** | 16/12/2022 |
| **Date last review** | 04/02/2025  |
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This policy links to our strategic objective:

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| image003  |  Enable people to be their best  |
| image001  |  An open learning culture  |
| image002  |  Transform through partnerships  |

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# Document change record

This change log is used to provide a trail of all approved changes made to this document. Changes are reviewed and approved prior to incorporation using established management procedures. Updated revisions of this document will be made as approved changes impact content or page numbers.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Pages affected** | **Revision** | **Author** |
| 0.1 | All | First draft | Ian Begg |
| 1.0 1.11.21.3  | AllAllAll All | Published UpdateUpdateUpdate  | Ian BeggSarah BlackmanArdeane LlewellynMandy Ritchie  |
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# Purpose & Scope

This strategy has been written in consultation to adopt a whole prison approach involving all functions and partner agencies. Those involved include our Prison Families worker and NEPACS. We work in partnership to provide a quality service that aims to make a difference. The current NEPACS contract commenced in October 2022 and will run for 5 years.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this strategy is to provide staff, prisoners, prisoners families and significant others with an overview of what HMP Durham currently provides and our future aspirations.

**Scope**

* Strengthening Prisoners’ Family Ties Policy Framework
* Visits Activities
* Services for Visitors
* Services for prisoners without contact with family and significant others
* Family Engagement & Advice
* Governance structure

Out of Scope

* Visits Policy
* ROTL Policy
* Security Policy
* Public Protection Policy

HMIP Expectations:

The prison understands the importance of family ties to resettlement and reducing the risk of reoffending. The prison promotes and supports prisoners’ contact with their families and friends. Programmes aimed at developing parenting and relationship skills are facilitated by the prison. Prisoners not receiving visits are supported in other ways to establish or maintain family support.

* Prisoners are encouraged and supported to establish and maintain relationships with their children and families, where it is appropriate to do so.
* The prison supports the rights of children visiting their parent in prison, subject to a risk assessment for public protection concerns.
* Prisoners have regular and easy access to mail, telephones and other communications, subject to a risk assessment for public protection concerns.
* Prisoners can maintain access to the outside world through regular and easy access to visits.
* Prisoners and their visitors are able to attend visits in a clean, safe and respectful environment which meets their needs.

# Introduction

***“Family relationships are the golden thread to reducing reoffending”***

The Lord Farmer report, published in August 2017, suggests that ‘Family should be the ‘golden thread’ running through the processes of all prisons. Family and significant relationships are considered as the third leg of the rehabilitation tool alongside Education & Employment as a key method by which we can prevent reoffending and reduce the likelihood of intergenerational crime.

We are committed to prioritising the family and significant others strategy, making sure to consider it within each function of the prison, including Security, Residential Services, Offender Management and the department in which it is driven from – Reducing Reoffending.

**Staffing**

The Family and Significant Others team is currently overseen by Head of Reducing Reoffending Mandy Ritchie and supported by:

* Custodial Manager Lawton leading on support for Families and Prison Visits
* A Family and Significant Others Champion
* NEPACS Contract Management team
* Prison Family Support Worker – Jill Harris
* NEPACS visits team
* DART (Drug & Alcohol Recovery Team) Family Support Worker
* The Offender Management Team
* The Chaplaincy Team
* The Mental Health Team
* The Security and Operations Team (who operate the visits facility)
* Gym Staff
* DART (Drug & Alcohol Recovery Team) Family Support Worker
* A Safer Custody Officer

# Diversity & Inclusion

At Durham:

* We believe that a diverse prison community is a better prison community.
* We believe that ensuring inclusivity is good for individuals and good for our prison.
* We believe that people should be able to be themselves in our prison, celebrated for their uniqueness.
* We believe in the importance of being open to learning how we can do better.

We have signed up to the HMPPS Diversity and Inclusion Statement and are working toward making sure that we deliver this commitment:

*“HMPPS is committed to Diversity and Inclusion for all. We treat our staff with respect and ensure equality of opportunity. We deliver our services fairly and respond to individual needs. We insist on respectful and decent behaviour from staff, prisoners, children, people on probation, and others with whom we work. We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment or bullying and we take prompt and appropriate action whenever we discover them. This is underpinned by our adherence to the Public Sector Equalities Duties as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.”*

Jo Farrar, CEO of HMPPS

This document is available in a range of different formats and languages upon request. Please contact the strategy owner, at (safercustodydurham@justice.gov.uk)

for further assistance.

# Understanding the Needs

As a family strategy team, we will be dynamic, assessing and responding to the changing needs of the current prisoner population.

**Needs Analysis**

We will conduct an annual needs analysis, using a variety of data sources including: whole prison surveys, local family data & visitor’s voice data. We will work with the psychology team to review the recommendations and plan provision for the year ahead.

**Visitors Voice**

 Visitors voice sessions will be organised and facilitated by NEPACS with the support of prison staff. These events will be held in the Visitor’s Centre a minimum of five times a year with details published in advance to visitors via the HMP Durham and NEPACS twitter accounts.

All feedback from visitors will be discussed at the monthly family meetings chaired by the Head of Reducing Reoffending and any areas for improvement will be addressed and fed into the action plan.

Children’s views and opinions are also greatly valued, NEPACS play workers will gather this information in a child appropriate forum with the consent of the children’s parents.

**Focus Groups & Prisoner Consultative Committee Feedback**

Prisoner Consultative Committee – these meetings are held fortnightly in the prison, chaired by the Head of Drug Strategy, prisoners are free to raise any issues they may have or suggestions for improvements. Partner agencies and staff are encouraged to attend the meetings to discuss specific topics, answer questions and/or to gain feedback, or separate focus groups may be organised.

Family Visits Prisoner Consultation meetings - these meetings are held monthly on the wings. The meetings are open to all prisoners to attend. The ideas and suggestions from the prisoners at these meetings are advertised as ‘You said, We did’ posters which are displayed in various locations.

Functional Focus Groups – these are held bi-monthly by the relevant functional heads in the prison and are designed to gain face to face feedback on functional developments and the impact on prisoners in custody. Any family related issues raised are passed to the Head of Reducing Reoffending for inclusion in the families and significant others meetings.

# Performance & Assurance

Durham is a high performing prison, and the family and significant others strategy team are dedicated to providing a service which meets the highest of standards. Below are some of the ways in which we hold ourselves to account and provide assurance to the Governor that the service that we provide to prisoners, their family’s and significant others meets the requirements of the Strengthening Prisoners’ Family Ties Policy Framework.

**Governance Meetings**

The prison will ensure that monthly contract management meetings are held with the provider to ensure that the contract is being adhered to. A quarterly performance review meeting will also be held with any areas that require improvements being escalated to senior contract manager. Minutes of these meetings are located in the Shared Drive in the F&SO’s folder. Actions from these meetings are monitored to ensure timely completion and escalated to the senior leadership team where the issue requires additional investment.

**Yearly Self-Assessment**

The prison service has introduced a self-assessment performance measure, this will feed into the overall performance of the prison.

*“Establishments will need to complete a self-assessment measure, answering a range of questions covering family and significant other work. The measure is designed to encourage a proactive approach to family and significant other work, and an establishment will score well if it is able to evidence proactivity in response to the range of questions within the measure.”*

Regular performance updates will be fed into monthly senior management team’s (SMT) Performance and Assurance meetings are chaired by the Head of Reducing Reoffending.

**Assurance Framework**

The Custodial Manager Family and Significant Others Champion will maintain responsibility for ensuring that assurance checks are carried out as per the assurance framework.

**HMIP**

The prison is subject to inspections by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Durham was last visited by HMIP in May 2024 and returned for an IRP visit in January 2025. Any recommendations from the published HMIP report will be taken into consideration in the Family & Significant Others action plan.

Please follow the link below to access the most recent full HMIP report.

[HMIP Report May 24.pdf](https://justiceuk-my.sharepoint.com/%3Ab%3A/g/personal/mandy_ritchie_justice_gov_uk/EWUugnw9walEqckJz4qsknUBWSnXwnTVtzWcYZVVgLoHUg?email=Mandy.Ritchie%40justice.gov.uk&e=FNRPp5)

HMIP have published expectations for mens’ prisons relating to section 75 to 79. The Families and Significant Others Lead will ensure that these expectations are considered in the relevant pathway of the monthly Reducing Reoffending Meetings.

[HMIP Expectations 2023.docx](https://justiceuk-my.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/personal/mandy_ritchie_justice_gov_uk/EWVy_AqfbtNFsuxAv_V_ONIBW-WbFpxezCaOPwZNU1L18Q?email=Mandy.Ritchie%40justice.gov.uk&e=RM6Rbq)

**IMB**

Please follow the link below to access the mot recent IMB report

[Durham-IMB-2022-2023-annual-report.pdf](https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaecede923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/13/2024/03/Durham-IMB-2022-2023-annual-report.pdf)

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# Facilities

**The Visitors Centre**

This area provides a welcoming environment for visitors to book in prior to their visit with prison staff along with NEPACS staff who can deliver a meet and greet service for new visitors. Refreshments are available as well as a children’s play area until the visitors are called forward for their visits.

The space is also used to provide a confidential meeting room where visitors can speak privately with staff for any support or signposting required. Support services include, but not limited to debt advice, employment and skills, children’s services, drug/alcohol support, women’s services housing, health, and wellbeing.

Also available:

* Secure lockers for visitors
* Comfortable seating
* Tea bar facility offering affordable cold drinks and snacks
* Toilet and baby change facilities

**Visits Hall**

The visits hall area at Durham includes:

* Designated Seats and tables
* Legal Visits rooms
* Soft Play area for children under 6 years of age
* Tea bar facility offering hot/cold drinks and snacks
* Toilet and baby change facilities with a dedicated accessible toilet
* Prison Video calling facilities
* Games Library for ages 6 – 17years old
* Enrichment activities provided by NEPACS
* Air conditioning
* Final contact/neurodiversity needs room

 

# What we offer

The services that we currently offer include:

**Visits**

Visits are held on

* Monday, 2pm to 4pm
* Tuesday 9.30am to 11.30am and 2pm to 4pm
* Wednesday 9.30am to 11.30am and 2pm to 4pm
* Thursday 2pm to 4pm
* Friday 2pm to 4pm,
* Saturday and Sunday 9.30am to 11.30am and 2pm to 4pm.

Family Learning sessions take place on a Friday evening, 17:15-18:45hrs.

Family Visit sessions run Thursday 9:30-11:30hrs.

Visits entitlements are outlined in PSI 16/2011, a copy of which is available in the prison library or on the internet via the HMP Durham & NEPACS website.

[Durham Prison - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/durham-prison)

Current Visits entitlement at HMP Durham is a maximum of 3 visits per week for remand prisoners and 1 visit every 14 days for convicted or sentenced prisoners pending spaces.

PVO’s are 2 per month and can be used Mon-Fri only.

Visits can be booked online, by emailing [www.gov.uk/prison-visits](http://www.gov.uk/prison-visits)

Or via the telephone, 0300 303 2300. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (closed on bank holidays).

The NEPACS contract specification requires NEPACS to *‘manage the Visits Room play areas during all scheduled visiting periods as required by the establishment. The contracted provider will ensure that provision of services to visitor’s children will be age appropriate and agreed by the Authority.’* At HMP Durham Nepacs play workers are present during visits to engage with the children, providing age-appropriate activities. We will also explore how we can support prisoners and their families that may have neurodiversity needs by providing appropriate play activities in a suitable environment. Children & Young People can also select a range of activities from the game’s library during all visits. The games on offer are rotated on a regular basis.

**Digital Services**

With the development of digital technology we have the following ways in which prisoners can keep in touch with their family, friends and significant others:

**Prison video calls**

* Phone Hub - video calling for those who are unable to visit in person, whether it be due to distance or mobility issues as well as individual preferences.
* In-room telephony – most prisoners have a phone in their room which they can use to contact family and friends that are on their contact list
* All prisoners have access to phones on the landings of each wing to contact loved ones on their approved list.
* Email a Prisoner – Prisoners can receive and respond to emails via this method.

**Father & Child**

* These sessions are provided weekly, with details published on the HMP Durham and NEPACS twitter pages. Prisoners are informed via internal advertising in the prison.
* The prison family support worker collaborates with NEPACS staff to arrange these visits
* Prisoners must apply for these visits.
* They need to be standard or enhanced prisoners and display a behaviour that is appropriate for a Family Visit environment and have been in HMP Durham for a minimum of 14 days and pass security checks.
* Attendance at these visits does not impact on their VO’s allowance.
* Children must be under 5 years of age and NOT in full-time education. (exceptions can be made for children with SEN).
* A NEPACS playworker will facilitate these sessions and a wide variety of activities including access to the soft play area are provided.
* The responsible adult will escort the child to the visits hall and once settled leaves the child with the prisoner and then returns to collect the child at the end of the session.
* Light refreshments are provided by NEPACS.
* Prisoners and families are requested to sign a ‘Code of Conduct’.
* Feedback will be collated at the end of each session to inform future planning.

**Family Days**

There are 6 Family days planned throughout the year, one for each of the main school holidays. The Family Days supersede the father & child session and are published internally to encourage applications. The prison family support worker collaborates with NEPACS staff to arrange these visits.

* Prisoners must apply for these visits.
* They need to be standard or enhanced prisoners and display a behaviour that is appropriate for a Family Visit environment and have been in HMP Durham for a minimum of 14 days and pass security checks.
* Children aged 0-17 years are included on the family days. When appropriate, Governor discretion can be used to meet the individual needs of a family.
* Feedback will be collated at the end of each session to inform future planning.

 Each family day is themed and offers:

* A wide variety of planned activities
* A finger buffet is provided
* Family photograph opportunities
* Prisoners and families are requested to sign a ‘Code of Conduct.

The gym staff, safer custody, and library staff come together to organise the family days with Nepacs, working hard to ensure that prisoners and their visitors can make positive memories and strengthen meaningful relationships.

**Family Learning**

* These sessions are planned from January 2024 and will run every Friday evening.
* The prison family support worker collaborates with NEPACS staff to arrange these visits.
* Prisoners must apply for these visits.
* They need to be standard or enhanced prisoners and display a behaviour that is appropriate for a Family Visit environment and have been in HMP Durham for a minimum of 14 days and pass security checks.
* Attendance at these visits does not impact on their VO’s allowance.
* Children of all ages are welcome to attend these visits.  The family can decide if they bring younger children to the visit, however they are not permitted to also attend the Thursday morning Family Visit.
* Family learning will consist of 12 x monthly blocks of family learning.
* Prisoners and loved ones can pick and choose which blocks of family learning they would like to attend.
* Light refreshments are provided by NEPACS.
* Prisoners and families are requested to sign a ‘Code of Conduct’.
* Feedback will be collated at the end of each session to inform future planning.

**VP Adult Only Family Day**

* HMP Durham have recently established VP adult only family days.
* There will be a variety of planned adult activities.
* There will be no children allowed on these visits.
* The prison family support worker collaborates with NEPACS staff to arrange these visits.
* Prisoners must apply for these visits.
* They need to be standard and enhanced prisoners, have been in HMP Durham for a minimum of 14 days and pass security checks.
* Attendance at these visits does not impact on their VO’s allowance.
* NEPACS will staff the tea bar.
* Evaluation and feedback will be collated at the end of this session to inform future events.

The prison family support worker, prison staff, NEPACS staff & volunteers will work in partnership to ensure that prisoners and their visitors can make positive memories.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of HMP Durham’s mind when facilitating visits including children and when working with cases where children are involved. HMP Durham ensure that we abide by the National Safeguarding Strategy to ensure our statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

**Enrichment Activities**

NEPACS will work with prisoners and their visitors to assess what types of enrichment activities are in demand, the offering will change depending on the needs identified.

This may include child free visits for couples or prisoners and their parents/grandparents. We are very keen that family enrichment activities do not focus only on children, prisoners may need to build or maintain relationships with parents, extended family, or significant others.

We will support prisoners and their families that have neurodiversity needs by exploring the use of quiet time visits, sensory play activities etc, to help them to maximise time with family utilising the dedicated F&SO’s contact room.

Cultural diversity will be embedded with the support of the Chaplaincy team ensuring awareness and observation of faith and cultural needs. A calendar of cultural and religious celebrations will also be observed with the support of the Education, Skills and Work and the Residential function.

**Every Contact Matters (ECM) and Community Days**

HMP Durham is committed to developing Every Contact Matters (ECM) Mentors, a peer support role that interacts with other prisoners to ascertain what type of support they can offer and make referrals to the Family Support Worker. Family Support Workers will work with referred individuals to identify Significant Others in their lives who they may be able to build positive relationships with to support their time in prison and on release. The ECM Mentors will support the Family Strategy Team to run monthly Community Days in the chapel, where those prisoners who do not get regularly supported by visits can engage with professional services and agencies working in support of our Families and Significant Other pathway, socialise with peers in a similar situation and benefit from some of our visits services.

**Family Support & Advice**

The full time Prison Family Support Worker is embedded in the safer custody team and line managed by the Head of Reducing Reoffending and is available during the core day, providing support to prisoners in the following areas:

* Supporting prisoners to re-establish contact with family and friends.
* Providing 1:1 casework, support on trouble shooting barriers to visits, access to children, issues with property, visitation rights, social services and signposting prisoners to the relevant legal support in the community regarding applications related to family contact/custody.
* Working with internal departments and partner agencies to ensure prisoners receive a joined-up approach to their case. This will also include contributing to ACCT’s and 1:1 referrals of complex cases from case managers.
* Communicating with the prisoners’ family/significant other and external organisations including but not limited to social services on behalf of the prisoner.
* Leading on the Peer to Peer pilot identifying prisoners who do not have family or significant others, they may or may not be care leavers or may have no contacts in the community. They will work with the NEPACS Family Engagement Worker who is allocated for 15 hours per week to promote the Official Prison Visits programme, as well as liaising with the chaplaincy team where appropriate.

A DART (Drug & Alcohol Recovery Team) Family Support Worker is also based in the prison. The DART family services are available to prisoners who are active on the DART caseload.

The Prison and DART Family Support Workers come together regularly to ensure their services complement each other, working together to achieve the best outcomes for prisoners and their loved ones.

The NEPACS visitor centre staff are available throughout the week to offer advice and support to families and significant others in person, by phone or email.

**Key worker**

The key worker role seeks to provide supportive challenge to prisoners, to motivate prisoners to use their time in custody to best effect. Key workers allow for a consistent individual with whom prisoners can establish a relationship, build trust and receive encouragement. Key workers can support prisoners’ relationships outside of prison. Key workers can remind individuals of the importance of keeping in touch and maintaining positive relationships with friends and family. Key workers can support those in our care to strengthen their relationships by:

* Helping prisoners to find out information on visiting hours
* Encouraging prisoners to reach our to family and friends through calls, visits and letters
* Encourage those without family to reach out to friends and get involved with social activities, networks and groups

These steps will seek to make a positive impact to the prisoner and their time within custody.

**Care Leavers**

Care leavers and care experienced people are an emerging priority across the criminal justice system, within the Family and Significant Others strategy is no exception.

We will ensure that those individuals in custody who are recognised as care leavers or care experienced people are identified appropriately at the earliest opportunity upon entry to custody.

Relevant local authorities will be contacted to ensure Personal Advisors are included where appropriate and requested by the young adult. Partnership working will ensure the best possible outcome for care leavers within our care.

**PACT Portal**

National Prisoner’s Families Helpline website for England and Wales, offering support for families who have a loved one in contact with the criminal justice system.

[HMP Durham | Prisoners' Families Helpline (prisonersfamilies.org)](https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/hmp-durham)

The Prisoners’ Families Helpline website provides a ‘worried about a prisoner’ portal to guide families with concerns to the right source of support and a Safer Custody Toolkit for prisons providing guidance, tools, and resources to support consistent and effective family engagement through recording, responding to and acting on safer custody concerns.

**Reading Opportunities**

Reading with children is a way in which families can bond, we therefor offer:

* **Story Book Dads** – the library team help prisoners to record a bedtime story which can be sent to their family in either CD or DVD format.
* **Borderline books -** A charity that HMP Durham works in partnership with to enable prisoners to request appropriate reading material free of charge.
* **The Induction wing** of the prison offers a range of reading materials to the prisoners on arrival into Durham while waiting to have access to the wide range of reading materials in the prison library.
* **Shannon Trust** - peer led, reading programme is offered to prisoners who cannot read.
* **Children’s Books** are available on request via the Nepacs family support worker for prisoners to use to in their room, reading to their child over the telephone.
* **Books** **are donated for children** to be presented with on family days and Durham County Council Library Service promote family reading.

**Offender Management**

Prison Offender Managers (POMs) provide support for our prisoners and encourage family ties and engagement whilst also communicating directly with community probation services. In addition they:

• Complete all relevant safeguarding referrals

• Encourage and monitor family ties as key targets within sentence plans Families are encouraged to attend the end of programme graduation event for those completing Kaizen and Thinking skills programme.

**Adult Safeguarding in prison**

Adult safeguarding in prisons means keeping prisoners safe and protecting them from abuse and neglect. This is underpinned by six key principles.

• Empowerment – Presumption of person led decisions and informed consent.

• Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs.

• Proportionality – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

• Protection – Support and representation for those in greatest need.

• Partnership – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

• Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering adult safeguarding

Prison staff have a common law duty of care to prisoners that includes taking appropriate action to protect them. Prisons have a range of processes in place to ensure that this duty is met. These also ensure that prisoners who are unable to protect themselves as a result of care and support needs are provided with a level of protection that is equivalent to that provided in the community. Definitions of abuse and neglect are based on those used in the Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued by the Department of Health in October 2014.

Abuse is any act, or failure to act, which results in a significant breach of a prisoner’s human rights, civil liberties, bodily integrity, dignity or general wellbeing, whether intended or inadvertent; including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which a person has not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative.

**In an emergency**

**Call 0191 332 3400 if you think a prisoner is at immediate risk of harm. Ask for the Orderly Officer and explain that your concern is an emergency.**

Our Safeguarding lead at HMP Durham is **John Robinson** Head of Safety, Equality and Inclusion, who can be contacted via email: john.robinson6@justoce.gov.uk or telephone: **0191 332 3695.**

For further information please see [Keeping adult prisoners safe: PSI 16/2015 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-adult-prisoners-safe-psi-162015)

**Information and support**

This series of short videos has been developed in partnership with prisoners and their families. It explores the different aspects of prison life and the support your loved one can access during their time in custody. These videos are copyrighted by prisoners family helpline: These videos are also available in other languages:

Please click the link to access the following video –

• [Prison Life Videos | Prisoners' Families Helpline](https://www.prisonersfamilies.org/prison-life-videos)



The following link will take you to HMP Durham website which provides useful information on the establishment:

[Durham Prison - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/durham-prison)