



# **Safety, well-being and hope: Examples of positive family provision in prisons**

March 2026

## Examples of positive practice

In the fieldwork for this thematic, we visited prisons where we had previously found positive family provision. The following is a list of the good practice that we found.

### Arrival and early days

Prison	Initiative	Description
Low Newton and Durham	Early days in custody (EDiC)	Delivered by NEPACS and providing targeted support to prisoners and family members during the critical first two weeks of custody. The workers provided a point of contact and practical help by, for example, helping prisoners to contact family and friends and book visits. The aim was to mitigate the shock of entering custody and to reduce negative feelings that could lead to behaviour such as self-harm and suicide.
Low Newton and Durham	Connect to Court	Project workers in court settings across Durham, Newcastle and Teesside gave support to families of people in contact with the justice system. They also provided risk and safeguarding information to the prison-based early days in custody worker.
Low Newton	Reception visits	Families could arrive at the prison at any time during the first two weeks to visit a family member without the need to book a visit session.
Manchester	Chaplaincy arrival checks	In addition to reception checks on arrival, chaplains asked whether prisoners received their initial phone call and, if not, they helped to arrange it.
Manchester	Category A checks	The prison expedited clearance of PIN numbers for category A prisoners, which were completed in house by the security team. Only high-risk category A prisoners and those falling under the Terrorism Act were sent to the police for checking.
Durham	Every Contact Matters (ECM) peer mentors	<p>ECM peer mentors spoke to all new arrivals to identify those without social contact, with a view to providing information about what support these prisoners might be able to receive through the jail.</p> <p>This also included arranging a monthly community day where there was a range of resettlement support available, including from NHS re-connect and well-being coaches.</p>

## Education and school partnerships

Prison	Initiative	Description
Parc	School Zone	Funded by external grants, the 'School Zone' scheme included three mentors who worked with children, families, teachers and prisoners to provide support and build mutual understanding between teachers and prisoners' families. Creative visit sessions, such as homework clubs, enabled prisoners to take a more active role in their child's education. Prisoners could also meet teachers and discuss their child's progress.
Wealstun	School project	Staff from seven schools attended the prison to help them to understand prison life and better support children with family members in jail. The visits included a Q&A session with prisoners. The scheme was in its infancy and the prison planned to extend it further.

## Inclusion and specialist groups

Prison	Initiative	Description
Ashfield	Bent Bars	A letter-writing project for LGBTQ+ prisoners.
Durham	Care leaver single points of contact (SPOCs)	The prison had appointed two SPOCs who invited all newly arrived care leavers under the age of 25 to a monthly drop-in session to help identify and resolve needs. They had a good relationship with members of Durham County Council care leavers team, who attended the drop-ins and provided awareness sessions for key workers.
Manchester	Neurodivergent sessions	Quieter visiting sessions available for those with neurodivergent needs.
Manchester	Young adult award	Prison staff nominated a 'young adult of the month'. The young person received a certificate, which was also sent to their next

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of kin with a covering letter detailing the reasons for the award.

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## Legal and advocacy support

Prison	Initiative	Description
Parc	Family law clinic	Offered free legal advice on family issues around child contact and wider information on family law.
Low Newton	Not beyond redemption	Charity providing a free legal clinic every two months, offering advice on family legal issues and some casework support, which continued until the conclusion of the matter, even after release.

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## Peer support and mentoring

Prison	Initiative	Description
Parc	Men's shed	Intervention focusing on men experiencing family separation or with children going into care. It provided an opportunity for men to talk to and support each other.
Ashfield	New Bridge	Pen pal scheme to support those with a limited support network.
Ashfield	Circles	A charity based in the prison that worked with people who had sexually offended. They linked prisoners with community volunteers who acted as sources of support as they approached release, and once they had left prison for their first 12 months back in the community.
Low Newton	Mums group (Mums matter)	The head of perinatal services ran a support group with the family worker for those with children under two years old.
Grendon	Buddy visits	The Safer Custody team compiled a list of people who received no visits and offered them prison visitors (New Bridge and

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chaplains), or 'buddy visits' from friends in prison or from nearby HMP Spring Hill.

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Low Newton	Building better relationships visit session	Prisoners without social visits were invited to a monthly 'building positive relationships' session to socialise and increase awareness of available support.
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## Parenting and family learning

Prison	Initiative	Description
Parc	Fireman for a day	An all-day parent and child event, available to children aged eight and over. Staff from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service attended with full equipment and delivered a fire safety lesson.
Parc	Language and play	The Language/Numbers & Play programme aimed to support parents to communicate and play with their children, with the ultimate goal of improving pre-school children's language, communication and numeracy skills, and developing parenting skills.
Parc	Baby first time visits and bath	This one-off visit took place in the family interventions lounge, allowing fathers to meet their babies in a more private environment. Family photos could be taken as a keepsake.
Parc	Teddy bears	Prisoners were able to record a personal message for their children, which they received in a teddy bear.
Durham	Family learning sessions	Weekly sessions were held on a Friday evening with structured activities, such as crafting and first aid training, which focused on family bonding.
Askham Grange	Children's library	The library provided books that mothers could read to their children over the phone or during video calls.

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Durham	Father and child visits	Relaxed visits for fathers and children under five took place once a month, with games and activities.
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## Staffing, training and coordination

Prison	Initiative	Description
Durham, Low Newton and Grendon	HMPPS family worker	Worked alongside the contracted family worker to help cover any gaps in provision and provide a link between the prison and family provider.
Manchester	Specialist training	The head of reducing reoffending had a background in social care and developed some training on safeguarding and domestic abuse, which she has delivered to staff and shared with another local prison.

## Visit interventions

Prison	Initiative	Description
Parc	Lounge visits	Specialised visits were available for prisoners on the Family Unit. These took place in a relaxed setting designed to replicate a family lounge.
Parc	Birthday cakes	An opportunity for men to purchase and decorate a cake for a special occasion such as a birthday or anniversary, which they could then take to a visit.
Low Newton and Parc	Farewell visits	Provided mothers and fathers in prison with a final visit with their child before he or she was adopted. Support was in place before, during and after these visits from skilled family support workers. Photographs were taken for both the parent's and child's life story books.
Ashfield	Lemon bus service	Free bus services for prisoners' families between the prison and the local train station.

Ashfield	Pooling visits	Flexible approach to visits booking that allowed prisoners to 'pool' their entitlement and have longer sessions. It was particularly useful for the many families who had long journeys to the prison.
Grendon	Wing family days	Additional family days were available twice a year on each wing, and were used as a creative way to involve families in the prisoners' therapy. They provided families with the opportunity to spend time on the wing, meet staff and other group members.
Askham Grange	Those who do not get visits are identified in the safety intervention meeting	A broad safety intervention meeting agenda identified prisoners without social release on temporary licence or visits, and explored the reasons for this.
Askham Grange	Tour of prison for families	Families who visited at the weekend and on family days were invited on a tour of the prison, including seeing where their family member lived.
Askham Grange	Acorn House	Families could spend the day with women in the comfortable and private Acorn House unit. It was also used for sensitive family meetings.
Manchester	Family events	Families were invited to regular events at the prison, some of which took place in the chapel rather than the visits hall.
Ashfield	Family at the Centre of Throughcare (FACT) days	Held every two months for about 10 prisoners and invited adult family members, the day included information about Ashfield, lunch and a presentation from prison staff, where families could ask questions. Families were invited to sign up to regular updates – those who agreed received an email with details about how the prisoner was doing in areas such education, work and offending behaviour programmes.