

HMP Altcourse



Family and Significant Others Strategy

‘Building and maintaining family ties.’

February 2025

Introduction to HMP Altcourse

Who we are

HMP Altcourse is based in Fazakerley, Merseyside, and has been managed by Sodexo Justice since June 2023. Sodexo aims to change lives for the better by operating safe, decent, and secure prisons while supporting rehabilitation. We provide purposeful activity, employment, education, and rehabilitation services to help individuals build better futures upon release.

HMP Altcourse employs Prison Custody Officers, integrated Facilities Management teams, and a wide range of bespoke rehabilitation services. These include resettlement programmes, offender behaviour programmes, education and skills development, vocational training, workshops, and industries.

Our prison population is complex and diverse, and we strive to deliver the best possible family services to those in our custody, as well as their families and significant others. We are committed to continuous learning and development at Altcourse and recognise that collaboration with partner organisations provides new opportunities and innovative ways of working with men in custody.

Fundamentally, we acknowledge both a professional and moral obligation to support, guide, and assist everyone in our custody. This includes fostering family interactions, parenting support, and building positive relationships and behaviours—where it is safe and appropriate to do so. By encouraging healthy and meaningful family and significant other interactions, we can have a substantial positive impact on both the men in our custody and the wider community.

Our **Family and Significant Others** strategy will guide us in positively influencing three key areas of ongoing concern:

- **Strengthening family relationships to support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.**
- **Breaking cycles of intergenerational offending by supporting families and children of prisoners.**
- **Providing clear information, emotional support, and practical guidance to families and significant others.**

To support this strategy, the Director has identified key staff to lead its implementation, ensuring that everyone working within HMP Altcourse remains focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for prisoners in our care and their families.

John Howgate - Head of Reducing Reoffending and Head of Offender Management Services

Alan Warburton - Prison Family & Remand Service Manager & FaSO Champion

Ailsa Oakes - SIG Family Service Manager & FaSO Champion

Jane Murphy - SIG Deputy Family Service Manager

Dianne Higgins & Tracey Best - Internal Visits Managers

Supporting Families & Significant Others



How we work

Families are the cornerstone of society, and HMP Altcourse recognises their central role in the rehabilitation process. Unlike statutory or non-statutory agencies, families and significant others often remain the only constant source of support for men in prison, providing emotional, physical, practical, and/or financial help. Supporting families enables us to address and positively challenge the effects of offending behaviour on prisoners, their families, local communities, and society as a whole.

We embrace the opportunity to work closely with families, and our Families & Significant Others Strategy outlines our commitment to implementing an innovative, trauma-informed service. We will work alongside families, developing relationships and a shared sense of responsibility to achieve positive outcomes for all. We will also provide spaces for men in custody and their families and/or significant others to share the issues they face, helping us shape and build a pioneering approach to family work across the UK's prison estate.

The strategy is built on our desire to work differently at HMP Altcourse. Many of the families and significant others visiting the prison are in crisis, with limited access to support from statutory or voluntary services. The majority of our visitors are women, often with children. Our 2025 strategy outlines how we plan to provide bespoke support that addresses the complexity of the prison system and its wider impact. We will offer tailored support for men through creative, trauma-informed programmes, while also focusing on the needs of families and significant others, providing them with space away from the man they're visiting and ensuring they feel heard, supported, and respected throughout their journey.

Our Promise

HMP Altcourse is committed to exploring and implementing creative and innovative approaches to building, maintaining, and strengthening healthy family connections.

We will;

- Treat people with dignity, decency and respect.
- Provide safe and secure visiting facilities, enabling men and their families to build and maintain healthy relationships.
- Ensure the needs of children are always prioritised, with robust Safeguarding and Child Protection policies upheld and followed.
- Collaborate with SIG Safe Ground to deliver an innovative Family Service that fosters a learning culture and drives positive change.
- Partner with relevant public, private, and voluntary sector organisations to provide comprehensive support.
- Consult with men, their families, and significant others to better understand the complexities they face and identify how our Family Service can best support them.
- Maintain and enhance our bespoke family counselling service that works with both men and their families, supporting them as a unit and individually.
- Ensure that the men and families have access to other relevant services and support.



- Deliver arts-based, trauma-informed work to demonstrate the benefits of new and innovative approaches.
- Identify and promote opportunities for families to be involved in key aspects of decision-making and sentence planning, where appropriate.
- Consistently monitor and evaluate our services, supporting a collaborative learning process that places rehabilitation at the core.
- Provide accurate, relevant, and timely information to families at the point of admission, throughout the sentence, and prior to release.
- Offer tailored support to families in times of crisis, responding sensitively to additional requests for contact.
- Provide opportunities for families to receive feedback on a prisoner's progress, when appropriate, through our family service team.
- Offer unique opportunities for children, supporting them in maintaining positive communication with a parent in prison.
- Make additional efforts to assist families living long distances away (including internationally) in maintaining contact with a loved one in prison.
- Ensure opportunities for children to communicate with parents in prison are consistently provided.
- Develop strategies to support individuals with limited interaction with families or significant others, including those who do not currently receive visits.
- Work closely with Prison Offender Managers, Remand Support Service Officers, and Key Workers to actively promote the HMPPS strategy of reducing reoffending.

At HMP Altcourse, we are committed to delivering a family service that is dynamic, responsive, and continuously evolving. Through a range of targeted interventions, we strive to maintain and strengthen family connections, recognising the vital role they play in rehabilitation and well-being. Our collaboration with SIG Safe Ground allows us to provide creative, trauma-informed learning and therapeutic support, giving men in custody the opportunity to reflect, grow, and develop healthier relationships. The following sections outline the services we deliver, each designed to uphold our commitment to families by offering meaningful support, fostering communication, and ensuring that no family feels alone during their loved one's sentence. As we continue to expand and refine our approach, we remain dedicated to finding new ways to meet the needs of those we serve.

The Family Service

Social Interest Group & Safe Ground

HMP Altcourse identified the need to provide a bespoke and innovative service to families, particularly given the high remand population at the prison. In partnership with SIG Safe Ground, we have developed a unique service that not only helps build and strengthen family ties and positive interactions, but also offers both men in custody and their loved ones opportunities to reflect, learn, and discover new coping strategies during times of crisis.

Since June 2023, HMP Altcourse has partnered with Social Interest Group (SIG) and their subsidiary charity Safe Ground to deliver and manage our family services and Outside Visits Centre. The service includes working with families in the Outside Visitors Centre seven days a week, delivering art-based therapeutic work with men across the prison, and offering a bespoke family counselling service, which has been running since February 2024.

The Social Interest Group (SIG) is a leading UK-based charity that provides bespoke person-centred social and health care solutions. Safe Ground has been at the forefront of pioneering arts-based therapeutic work within the criminal justice system, creating and delivering the first-ever arts-based family programmes for men in prison and their families.

The Outside Visitors Centre

At HMP Altcourse, we understand that visiting a prison can be a challenging and stressful experience. With over 40,000 visitors expected this year, including 10,000 children, we are committed to ensuring that every visitor feels supported and well-informed throughout their visit.



The Visitors Centre, located just outside the prison, is managed by SIG Safe Ground. To help ease the experience, SIG Safe Ground employs a team of experienced Family Liaison Workers who provide tailored support to families and significant others seven days a week.

Given that we support a high number of short-stay prisoners and first-time visitors, our empathetic staff work to ensure that both children and adults have the best possible experience at Altcourse. The Family Service team handles all booking-in processes, and Family Liaison Workers offer one-to-one support, assisting with complex enquiries and liaising with internal and external services to provide comprehensive support for families.

For visitors traveling to the prison, there are convenient transport options:

- A bus stop is located just outside the prison.
- Fazakerley Train Station is approximately 1 mile away.
- Additional travel information is available from staff in the Visitors Centre.

A dedicated visitors' car park is available, along with disabled (Blue Badge) parking bays directly outside the Visitors Centre. The team also works closely with security to ensure reasonable adjustments are made for visitors where appropriate.

The Family Service team works collaboratively with security and the visits team to ensure that those visiting our establishment have a safe, child-friendly experience.

We provide:

- **Toilet and baby-changing facilities** – with disabled access.
- **Information, advice, and guidance** – available to all visitors.
- **Lockers** – for secure storage of visitors personal items.
- **Property drop-off** – for the safe delivery and collection of items to and from prisoners.
- **Confidential support service** – offering one-to-one assistance from Family Liaison Workers.
- **Family counselling service** - providing appointment-based or ad hoc support for families and significant others.
- **Range of child/family interventions** – including arts-based therapeutic support and bespoke family counselling offer.
- **Books and toys** – available for children to enjoy during their visit.
- **Visitor Feedback forms** – with QR code for easy access to share thoughts and suggestions.
- **Transport assistance** – including help with travel information.
- **Accessibility assistance** – including reasonable adjustments for visitors.
- **Cross service collaboration** - working with internal and external partners to enhance family support.

The Visits Hall



Our internal Visits Hall is managed by our experienced Visit Managers, who have a deep understanding of HMP Altcourse's population and the visiting process. Their expertise ensures that the visiting experience is as straightforward and stress-free as possible for all involved.

We also provide a dedicated space for new mothers, offering a safe and private environment to breastfeed their babies. This facility has been recognised with a Mayoral Charter Mark of Accreditation, making HMP Altcourse the first prison in the country to offer this service.

Facilities include:

- **Café** – offering a selection of hot and cold food and drinks during each visit session (maximum £30 cash payment).
- **Activities for children** – providing engaging options to keep young visitors entertained.
- **Gender-neutral, disability-compliant toilet facilities** – ensuring accessibility for all visitors.
- **Full disability access** – including wheelchair and pushchair accessibility to all areas.
- **Parenting Room** – dedicated space for breastfeeding and baby changing.
- **High chairs and additional/alternative seating** – available for families' comfort.
- **First Aid** – all staff are fully trained in First Aid and Emergency First Aid.
- **Defibrillator and first aid kits** – on-site to ensure immediate medical response if needed
- **Purple Visits** – offering virtual visits for those unable to attend in person
- **Vinnie's Visits** – special visits tailored for children with neurodiversity, providing a more comfortable and supportive environment for those who may find regular visits challenging



Family Days

We host **monthly Family Days**, offering an extended visit that allows men in custody to spend meaningful time with their loved ones. These special visits have fewer restrictions than on a regular visit and provide plenty of opportunities for families to engage in creative and interactive activities together.

The aim of Family Days is to:

- Build and strengthen healthy family and social relationships
- Give men in custody valuable time to connect with their children in a supportive environment
- Encourage play and creative interaction between families
- Provide a sense of normality and stability during challenging times

SIG Safe Ground also works in partnership with the **Give A Book** scheme through **Prison Reading Group**, providing a selection of books for each Family Day event. Each child attending is invited to choose a book to encourage reading with parents and at home, supporting our prison-wide reading strategy. We also gather feedback from families at the end of each event and share it with the wider team to help shape and improve the service.

Vinnie's Visits

Vinnie's Visits is a pioneering scheme designed specifically for families with children who have neurodiversity and find attending a regular prison visit extremely challenging. These specialised visits offer a much quieter, calmer environment with fewer distractions, allowing children the freedom to move around and play as needed.

Unlike standard visits, families attending Vinnie's Visits bypass the Outside Visitors Centre and go straight into HMP Altcourse, eliminating potentially distressing waiting times. This reduces anxiety and creates a more comfortable and accessible experience for both children and their families.

Vinnie's Visits was developed in collaboration with a highly skilled Family Link Worker from Liverpool City Council, SIG Safe Ground's Family Counsellor, and was led by HMP Altcourse's Neurodiversity Lead. The sessions have already proven to be a lifeline for some families who would otherwise struggle to visit due to the loud, restrictive, and often overwhelming nature of a regular visit.

Family Counselling Service

HMP Altcourse and SIG Safe Ground recognised the need for a dedicated Family Counselling Service to provide meaningful and therapeutic support to families affected by imprisonment. Developed through extensive consultation with prisoners, their families, and significant others, the service ensures that support is tailored to the real challenges faced by those impacted by custody. SIG Safe Ground's Family Counsellor has built a comprehensive support system that strengthens family relationships, promotes rehabilitation, and improves emotional well-being.

The service includes:

- **Ad hoc support** for families and significant others, offering both one-on-one sessions and group counselling based on individual needs.
- **Stay and Play & Dad and Kids Club** – collaborative sessions with Liverpool City Council's Family Link Worker, providing structured opportunities for fathers and children to bond while offering therapeutic support for partners.

- **Therapeutic group work** with men in custody, integrated into SIG Safe Ground's arts-based programmes, helping to develop healthier behaviours and coping strategies.
- **One-to-one counselling** for partners of men in custody, offering emotional support and guidance tailored to their specific circumstances.
- **Post-programme group counselling**, allowing men to reflect on their rehabilitation work and receive continued emotional support.
- **Family therapy sessions**, providing a holistic approach to strengthening relationships and addressing family dynamics.
- **Launching in 2025, a new group counselling drop-in service** for partners of men in prison, creating a safe and accessible space for ongoing support.

By working closely with the Offender Management Unit (OMU) and internal teams, the Family Counselling Service continues to evolve, identifying families in crisis and providing tailored counselling to ensure they receive the right support at the right time.

This service has already proven to be invaluable, offering families a safe space to heal, communicate, and maintain positive relationships throughout a loved one's sentence.

Collaborative Family Support

In 2024, HMP Altcourse launched a groundbreaking family therapy programme, the first of its kind within the prison estate. This initiative has proven highly beneficial for the families involved, offering structured opportunities for parents and children to strengthen their bonds in a supportive environment. The programme was developed through a unique collaboration between Liverpool City Council's Family Link Worker and SIG Safe Ground's Family Counsellor.

The programme includes structured sessions that provide families with access to unique support. One key component is the 'Stay and Play' session, where fathers engage in facilitated play with their children, allowing for meaningful one-on-one bonding time. At the same time, their partners receive counselling from our dedicated Family Counsellor, ensuring comprehensive support for the entire family unit.

For families with older children, we offer the 'Dad and Kids Club,' which follows a similar structure, tailored to foster connection and quality time between fathers and their older children.

These sessions provide numerous benefits, including:

- Strengthening parent-child relationships in a secure and structured setting
- Supporting children's emotional well-being and mitigating the impact of separation

- Enhancing fathers' parenting skills and confidence
- Providing partners with access to vital therapeutic support
- Identifying parents who may be struggling and offering tailored one-on-one assistance

This pioneering initiative has not only enhanced family relationships but also allowed us to better understand and address the challenges families face, ensuring they receive the appropriate support.



Baby Programme

The Baby Programme is a five-session initiative designed to strengthen the bond between fathers in custody and their babies. Held in the Visits Hall, the programme begins with a hands-on session where dads learn how to bathe their baby, followed by four accredited baby massage sessions through Open Awards. These sessions provide a warm and supportive environment where fathers can develop essential parenting skills and build strong attachments with their child.

Mothers are encouraged to attend alongside their partners, with the opportunity to stay for group counselling sessions led by our Family Counsellor, offering them additional emotional support and guidance.

Initially available only to fathers on the Family Intervention Unit, the programme has now been extended to include dads across the wider prison population, ensuring more families can benefit from this valuable experience.



Nurturing Programme

The Nurturing Programme is a 10-session parenting programme created by Family Links which aims to help parents and children live emotionally healthy lives, focusing on four main constructs: self-awareness, appropriate expectations, empathy, and positive discipline. Children are rewarding, stimulating and fun but looking after them can be stressful and challenging. The Nurturing Programme helps deal with those challenges helping them to access new and sustainable approaches parenting. The programme is accredited through Open Awards and address the following;

- Understanding why children behave as they do
- Recognising the feelings behind behaviour (ours and theirs)
- Exploring different approaches to discipline
- Finding ways to develop co-operation and self-discipline in children
- Learning the importance of looking after ourselves

Reducing Parental Conflict

While not all conflict is harmful, unresolved tensions within families can negatively impact children's emotional, social, and physical well-being. Helping families recognize and address relationship challenges before they escalate is key to fostering healthier family dynamics.

These six sessions provide participants with a deeper understanding of parental conflict, distinguishing it from domestic abuse, and highlighting the importance of the child's perspective. The sessions normalize conflict as a part of everyday life while emphasizing the significant impact that harmful conflict can have on children and young people.

Fathers will gain insight into the common stressors that contribute to parental conflict—whether in intact or separated families—and learn to recognize signs that a relationship may be in distress.

The programme supports men in:

- Understanding the nature of conflict and its impact.
- Recognising how conflict influences parenting and family dynamics.
- Identifying common causes of conflict.
- Understanding the different roles children may take on in response to conflict.

By increasing awareness and providing practical strategies, this session empowers fathers to foster healthier communication and more positive family interactions.

Family Service Intervention Programmes

As part of our Family Service offer, SIG Safe Ground provides creative, trauma-informed learning and reflective spaces for men in custody. Our family service intervention programmes support men in exploring and understanding themselves and their behaviors, developing healthier ways of interacting, engaging with arts and culture, learning new coping strategies, and moving forward positively.

Safe Ground are experts in designing and delivering arts-based therapeutic group work, tailoring their approach to meet the needs and priorities of participants. Their programmes focus on:

- **Personal development** through an arts-based methodology that fosters self-awareness and growth.
- **Therapeutic group work** to explore identity, values, and attitudes, supporting attitudinal shifts and improving mental well-being.
- **Strengthening family relationships** to encourage desistance, resettlement, intergenerational bonding, and kinship networks.
- **Education, training, and employment progression**, engaging learners who may struggle in traditional classroom settings.
- **Enhancing staff-prisoner relationships**, promoting a whole-institution approach to rehabilitation.
- **Ongoing evaluation**, consistently monitoring feedback and engagement to ensure best practice and continuous improvement.

By providing a structured and creative space for self-reflection, these programmes empower men in custody to develop essential life skills, strengthen relationships, and work toward a more positive future.

Man Up

Man Up is an arts-based group programme designed to support young and adult men in custody. It encourages participants to explore the values, attitudes, and societal expectations that shape traditional ideas of masculinity, as well as the pressures that come with them.

The programme helps men in custody to:

- Examine the role masculinity plays in criminal behavior.
- Explore how perceptions of masculinity influence both individual and group identity within prison.
- Challenge and address harmful masculine attitudes.
- Develop essential social skills in a supportive, non-judgmental space, helping them embed healthier behaviors into their daily lives.

Father's Inside

Father's Inside is Safe Ground's flagship family relationships programme and the first of its kind to be delivered across multiple prisons. Using an arts-based approach, it helps participants reflect on their own experiences, their role as parents, and the impact of incarceration on family relationships.

Through the programme, participants:

- Reflect on their own upbringing and personal life experiences to better understand how significant events have shaped their current attitudes and behaviors.
- Engage in creative, group-based activities that build self-esteem and develop transferable life skills.
- Learn the importance of clear and effective communication within family relationships, developing healthier behavioral patterns and coping strategies.
- Explore the value of co-parenting and supporting a partner, even while in custody.
- Gain new perspectives and coping mechanisms to strengthen family bonds and prepare for reintegration.

Both programmes empower participants with the tools to challenge negative patterns, develop emotional intelligence, and build stronger, more positive relationships both inside and outside of custody.



Supporting Care Leavers in Custody and Beyond

Care leavers make up a significant and growing proportion of the prison population, with many having faced adversity, trauma, and instability from a young age. These experiences leave them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The term "care leaver" refers to individuals who have spent time in the care of local authorities, whether through accommodation placements or full care orders, with support now extending until their 25th birthday.

It is estimated that a quarter of people in the prison system have, at some point, been in the care system. Many of these individuals enter the Criminal Justice System at an early age, having spent time in children's homes, secure units, young offender institutions, and adult prisons. Additionally, a significant number have been removed from mainstream education, further limiting their opportunities and support networks.

Looked-after children often experience frequent placement moves, with many being housed far from their home communities, family members, and key support systems. As a result, they can face profound isolation, with family ties weakened or lost altogether. In many cases, a young person's Personal Advisor (PA) may be their only consistent point of support throughout their time in care.

Our Commitment to Care Leavers

In 2025, we created a new **Care Leavers Charter** to support care leavers both during custody and beyond. Through a wraparound service that brings together internal teams and external agencies, we aim to provide targeted interventions that address the unique challenges these individuals face, helping them rebuild stability, develop essential life skills, and access the support they need to move forward positively.

To ensure comprehensive and effective support, we will:

- Help staff understand care experience and the support available.
- Develop networks and relationships with local authorities.
- Take time to develop relationships and build trust with care-experienced individuals.
- Explain why we are asking questions and ensure prisoners feel safe to talk about their care experience when they are ready.
- Respect that not all individuals will want to share their care experience with us.
- Assume everyone may have experienced care and provide information about available support.
- Look for signs that someone may be care-experienced, such as lack of visits.
- Ensure there is a dedicated **Single Point of Contact (SPOC)** and trained peer support who receive supervision.
- Hold **bi-monthly focus groups** to enable care-experienced individuals to come together.

- Use the **care-experienced flag on database** to add relevant information, including PA details.
- Contact the local authority/PA (with consent) to inform them when a young adult is in custody.

Providing Essential Support

- Explain financial, accommodation, education, and health entitlements linked to local offers via their **Prison Offender Manager (POM)**.
- Liaise with the local authority prior to a young person's **21st birthday** to ensure they can stay with their current PA rather than being assigned a duty worker.
- Inform eligible individuals (up to 25 years old) that they can request support and assist them in doing so.

Support on Arrival

- Prisoners will be asked about their family circumstances and any contact they have had with their local authority.
- They will be asked to **consent** to contacting their PA if necessary.
- They will be helped to understand the support available and provided with tailored information relevant to their needs.
- Encouraged and supported to add their **Personal Advisor to their PIN phone and visitor list**.
- Shown **positive examples** of individuals with care and custodial experience who have successfully overcome challenges.

Resettlement Support

To ensure a smooth transition back into the community, we will:

- Inform the PA of key dates and significant events (with consent).
- Identify needs and support access to activities such as basic life skills development.
- Support individuals in opening **bank accounts and obtaining identification**.
- Work collaboratively with local authorities to contribute to **pathway and care planning**.
- Liaise with other services such as **health and pre-release teams** to determine necessary support upon release, such as safe and appropriate accommodation.
- Consider the use of **Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) or virtual meetings** to help individuals see where they might be living post-release.

By implementing these measures, we are committed to ensuring that care-experienced individuals in custody receive the support they need, not only during their sentence but also as they transition

back into the community, reducing the likelihood of reoffending and helping them build a more stable future.

Prison Radio

Our prison radio station offers a unique opportunity for prisoners to stay connected with their families via **song requests**.

Prisoners host their own radio shows and invite song requests from loved ones, creating a shared, personal experience. To make it easier for families to participate, we've placed a QR code in the Visitors' Centre, allowing for quick and easy song submissions. For those without smartphone access, we also provide a paper request box, ensuring that all families can take part.

This initiative plays a key role in strengthening family bonds, offering a simple yet meaningful way for families to connect and send messages to their loved ones.

The **Storybook Dads** scheme is an initiative that helps imprisoned parents stay connected with their children by allowing them to record bedtime stories on CDs or DVDs. The program operates thanks to the HMP Altcourse Prison Radio team, providing inmates with the opportunity to read and record stories for their children, who then receive the recordings along with the books. This initiative helps maintain emotional bonds between parents and their children, reducing the sense of separation and providing comfort to young ones. It also supports prisoners in improving their literacy skills and fosters a sense of responsibility and connection to family life, which can be crucial for rehabilitation and reducing reoffending rates.

Partnerships

We are committed to expanding our capacity and refining our best practice models by working in collaboration with external agencies. Effective partnership working fosters shared learning, allowing us to continuously evaluate and enhance our approach. For families and significant others, access to a diverse range of support services is crucial, particularly during times of crisis.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop and maintain strong partnerships with external agencies to offer a broad range of family support services.
- Improve coordination between internal departments, including residential units, resettlement teams, visits, and programme providers, ensuring a more integrated approach to meeting the needs of men in custody and their families.
- Strengthen information-sharing processes between staff and external agencies to ensure better support for families.
- Collaborate with partners to develop visiting schemes for isolated offenders, individuals without dependants, and the families of sex offenders.
- Provide structured opportunities to rebuild and restore family relationships before release, working closely with both internal teams and external support networks.

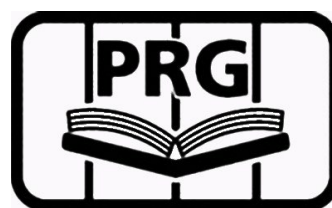
By fostering meaningful partnerships, we aim to create a more holistic, effective, and responsive family support system that meets the diverse needs of those affected by imprisonment.



Preventing victims by changing lives

PRISONVOICEMAIL

LIVERPOOL
TATE



Prison Reading Groups



Edge Hill University



Safe Ground

Final Statement

This strategy will serve as the foundation for delivering our Family and Significant Other Strategy, ensuring that families are included at every stage of the journey, from committal to release. Offending behavior is complex and influenced by multiple factors, which is why we must draw not only on the expertise of professionals but also on the invaluable insights and experiences of families themselves.

If we are to reduce reoffending and lessen its impact on individuals, families, and the wider community, we must recognise and respect the crucial role families play in supporting prisoners both during their time in custody and as they reintegrate into society.

Extensive research demonstrates that men who maintain strong, positive family ties throughout their sentence are significantly more likely to achieve successful rehabilitation. The benefits extend beyond the individual, fostering greater family stability, reducing harm to children, lowering reoffending rates, and ultimately decreasing the prison population. This, in turn, eases the burden on vital community resources, including the judicial system, police, probation services, social services, mental health support, and drug and alcohol services.

We also acknowledge the importance of providing tailored, one-to-one support for families and significant others. In the current landscape, such support is often limited. For true rehabilitation to take place, we must place families at the heart of our service, ensuring they receive the guidance and assistance they need throughout their prison experience.

Director
Steve Williams



Head of Offender Management Services /
Reducing Reoffending
John Howgate



Useful contacts:

HMP Altcourse Switchboard

0151-522-2000

HMP Altcourse Safer Custody Helpline

0151-522-2021

Safer Custody Portal

[HMP Altcourse Safer Custody Contact Form | Prisoners' Families Helpline](#)

Altcourse SIG Safe Ground Family Service Team

Phone switchboard & ask to be put through to Visitors Centre or press '5' and use extension 2234.



Safe Ground

Terms of Reference

HMP Altcourse closely follows the HMPPS Guidance notes with regard to what 'family' represents, as well as the precautions and safeguards we need to enforce, as such the following 3 points are endorsed by us directly from the HMPPS Guidance notes:

A:- 'Family' is defined as either a blood relative, legal or significant persons that a prisoner identifies as their next of kin. For Care-Leavers this may be someone that provides a statutory service, friend or associate. Many of those in custody will have experienced a non-traditional upbringing, with a range of adults having cared for them, and similarly those in custody with children may have other arrangements outside of a traditional family arrangement. It is important to accommodate all 'family' arrangements where they provide a constructive and supportive relationship for the prisoner and their family.

B:- We recognise that not all family relationships are positive. Family members may sometimes be the direct or indirect victims of a prisoner's offence such as domestic abuse. These individuals have the right to protection from their perpetrator and in all cases; permission should be sought from the victim and any relevant partner agencies before making contact. This will enable the victim/family unit to be supported in the community. E.g. Victim Liaison Officer or Local Authority Social Services.

C:- 'Other family or significant others' may be enablers, contributing to their offending behaviour. Prisoners may be subject to harassment or restraining orders and the courts take primacy in how we manage familial and other relationships. We must therefore ensure that we prevent inappropriate contact.