
CLINKS BRIEFING ON THE FINAL REPORT OF THE FARMER REVIEW

The importance of strengthening prisoners' family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime

Introduction

In July 2016, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) commissioned Lord Farmer, ¹ in partnership with Clinks, to lead a review which investigated how engagement with families in the adult male prison estate across England and Wales could reduce reoffending and address intergenerational crime. It also looked at what empowered governors could do to help prisoners maintain and improve their family and other significant relationships. The review's final report was published in August 2017 and welcomed by the Secretary of State for Justice, who said, "Families can play a significant role in supporting an offender and I am grateful to Lord Farmer for his dedication and research on this important issue". This briefing provides a summary of the findings and recommendations set out in the review's final report.

Although the review focused mainly on outcomes for the majority male prison population, it also used learning from what works well for women in prison and their families. The term 'family' was taken in the broadest possible sense, in order to ensure that all important social ties (such as close friendships or non-marital relationships) were included in the review.

Lord Farmer was also asked to review what works to help those men who do not have any family connections, such as those whom were previously in the care system, or have lost contact with family because of going to prison or due to the nature of their offences.

Evidence gathering process:

- The review team convened a task group chaired by Lord Farmer, with Clinks' Chief Executive Anne Fox as the Deputy Chair. The group was made up of people with lived experience, voluntary sector organisations supporting men in prison and their families, and representatives from prison and probation services.

- Lord Farmer and the review team visited prisons and met with men in prison, their families, prison staff and experts from the statutory, voluntary and academic sectors.
- The review team also issued a call for evidence on National Prison Radio and distributed surveys for men in prison and their families through Clinks' members.

Over 1,000 responses were received from men in prison and their families, as well as additional responses from voluntary sector organisations, academics and members of staff in the statutory sector. This gave the review team a strong evidence base to make recommendations and also demonstrated the importance of this issue for all those involved in the criminal justice system. The review's final report welcomes the MoJ's programme of reform and mirrors the structure of the 2016 Ministry of Justice white paper, Prison Safety and Reform,² in order to show how each area of reform will be strengthened by ensuring family work is embedded in the solutions proposed.

Lord Farmer acknowledges the severe existing problems in prisons and the need to overcome these in order to provide a realistic environment for rehabilitation. These include overcrowding, understaffing, the increase in use of new psychoactive substances, increased violence and the prevalence of mental health problems.

The report's introduction explores the historical context of family work in prisons, highlighting the relevant recommendations of Lord Woolf's report in 1991³ and detailing the developments in the prison system that followed, such as the inclusion of the importance of outside relationships in the Prison Rules and the pioneering of new initiatives by the voluntary sector. In particular, it emphasises a 2014 Joint Thematic Review by Ofsted and HM Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation, which concluded that, "An offender's family are the most effective resettlement agency".⁴ Key findings and recommendations of the Farmer Review's final report

1. The Right Framework for Improvement

The report notes that the importance of contact with families has not yet been prioritised in practice within the prison system. A number of its recommendations aim to ensure that there is a clear responsibility for government and for leaders within the prison service to drive forward family work in prisons.

Quality, consistency and accountability

The report suggests that the proposal in the 2016 white paper Prison Safety and Reform, to make the Secretary of State accountable to parliament for outcomes in prisons, would provide an important opportunity to ensure prisoners' family ties are embedded in the culture and practice of prisons. The report gives examples of the need for clearer lines of accountability for the delivery of effective family work in prisons, such as the lack of enforcement of section 11 of the Children Act 2004 in prisons-this Act requires prison governors and directors to ensure their functions and services have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. It also highlights the ineffectiveness of Prison Rule 4 for ensuring 'special attention' is paid to the maintenance of relationships between prisoners and their families.

An important finding of the review was that, while much good practice exists across the prison estate, there is still an unacceptable level of inconsistency in family services. As prisoners are transferred between prisons often, this causes significant difficulty for men in prison and their families in having to navigate new systems and services at each prison. The above recommendation aims to provide consistency in the extent and quality of family services at each prison, with clear lines of accountability for ensuring that the importance of family ties is recognised in principle and in practice across the prison estate.

The report views this review of policy frameworks as an opportunity to explicitly embed the importance of family ties in the purpose and culture of prisons.

Key recommendation:

There should be a clear and simple structure for accountability as regards prisoners' contact and relationships with their family:

- The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice to be made responsible for ensuring prisoners' family ties are consistently treated as important across the estate by including them in his accountabilities.
- It should be explicitly specified that the Performance Agreements the Secretary of State enters into with governors and executive governors of prison clusters must include a 'local family offer' to ensure that effective family work is delivered inside prisons.

- The Performance Agreement with each prison should specify the following local family offer elements (with guidance from the Ministry of Justice) but detailed design and delivery to be at the broad discretion of governors in each establishment:
 - a) Visitor base/centre and visiting services
 - b) Staffing structure to ensure family work is an operational priority
 - c) Extended visits
 - d) Family learning
 - e) 'Gateway' communication system
- The Ministry of Justice should ensure that the importance of family ties is a golden thread running through the new policy frameworks based on the revised and pruned body of Prison Service Orders and Prison Service Instructions and also Probation Instructions.

The report also explores the role of inspection and other scrutiny arrangements, noting that while HM Inspectorate of Prisons does emphasise the importance of contact with family and friends, the role of family ties could feature more broadly throughout the Inspectorate's Expectations. Lord Farmer suggests, for example, that Expectations could require prisons to have a relationship with local schools attended by prisoners' children, or could include family contact in their definitions of 'purposeful activity'. HM Inspectorate of Prisons published its updated Expectations for men's prisons in July 2017, which include a detailed section on contact with children, families and the outside world.⁵

Key recommendation:

Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons must ensure that the importance of family ties features prominently throughout the new Expectations currently being refined, so empowered governors know this has to be a cross-cutting priority in the running of their prison.

Continuing the theme of quality and consistency of work to develop and maintain family ties, the report discusses funding for family services. It raises concern over the low level of funding allocated to family services by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in the most recent round of national commissioning, suggesting that this is disproportionate when compared with the investment in other resettlement pathways such as drug and alcohol treatment and

Notes

1. Lord Farmer is a Conservative Peer who, having experienced some challenges in his early family life, advocates government policy and services which strengthen family ties as a way to help people to realise their true potential.
2. Ministry of Justice (2016). Prison Safety and Reform. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565014/cm-9350-prison-safety-and-reform_-_web_.pdf
3. Prison Reform Trust (1991). The Woolf Report: A summary of the main findings and recommendations of the inquiry into prison disturbances. Available online: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Woolf%20report.pdf>
4. HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted (2014), Resettlement provision for adult offenders: Accommodation and education, training and employment, p5. Available online: https://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-activity/resettlement/criminaljusticejointinspection/1693032014_Resettlement-thematic-for-printSept-2014.pdf
5. Available online: <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/our-expectations/prison-expectations/>
6. See: <https://www.spurgeons.org/>
7. Prison Reform Trust and Clinks (2015). Inside out Release on temporary licence and its role in promoting effective resettlement and rehabilitation. Available online: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/InsideOutfinal.pdf>
8. The successful completion rate for release on temporary licence in 2016 was 99.92%, as cited in Prison Reform Trust (2017). Prison: the facts Summer 2017. Available online: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Summer%202017%20factfile.pdf>
9. See: <http://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice-working-prisons/clinks-prison-work>
10. Department for Work and Pensions (2014), The Family Test: Guidance for Government Departments. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/>

About CLINKS

CLINKS supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities

More information on: <http://www.clinks.org/>

- The new leadership programme should give governors a solid grasp of the impressive evidence base that shows good relationships with families are key to rehabilitation and reducing intergenerational reoffending.
- Personal officer job descriptions must include developing personal relationships with their prisoners and their training must reverse the de-skilling that has prevented many from undertaking informal support for prisoners' family ties.
- As a quarter of prisoners were formerly in the care of the local authority, personal officer training must also include awareness of how to help them with the psychological and other issues care-experienced men often face. These can affect their ability to form the relationships that will help them to desist from offending and settle back into the community after their sentence.

16. All new-build prisons should be subject to the Government's Family Test and required to produce a family impact assessment which should be published.

17. Consideration should be given to the closeness of family or other supportive relationships as part of any proposed movements of prisoners out of their home region.

- Governors should arrange, in collaboration with HMPPS Population Management Unit, to ensure prisoners moved out of area are repatriated at the earliest opportunity to the prison region of their family and wider community (if beneficial to the successful completion of their individual sentence plan).
- As part of any decision concerning prison re-rolling, governors in collaboration with HMPPS, should be required to produce a family impact assessment that considers the proximity of prisoners to their families or other supportive relationships. This should also be published.

18. The MoJ should require prisons to demonstrate mutually beneficial links with local businesses, schools and other bodies in the wider community.

19. Virtual visits using video calling technology should be available for the small percentage of families or individual family members who cannot visit frequently or at all due to infirmity, distance or other factors.

employment, training and education. Lord Farmer mentions the voluntary organisations he came across with excellent track records in delivering services and bringing in additional funding for family work.

“In the main, any movement or progression in family services in prisons has been led, developed and funded by the voluntary sector. This is one reason why provision is so patchy and a lot better developed in some geographical areas and individual establishments than others.”

Diane Curry, Chief Executive of POPS and Farmer Review Task Group member

2. Raising standards

The Prison Safety and Reform white paper sets out four standards to be used as performance measures for prisons. The report welcomes the inclusion of the following measure on family ties under standard three:

'To support prisoners to maintain links back to the community, we will work to develop a measure of the quality of prisoners' family relationships.'

It also argues however that family ties should feature across each of the white paper's four standards to recognise the importance of family ties in all aspects of rehabilitation.

Key recommendation:

Family work should be included in all four standards in the Prison Safety and Reform white paper.

Standard 1: Public protection Policy frameworks should require evidence of the involvement of families or other supportive relationships in sentence planning, resettlement planning and decisions regarding the use of Release on Temporary Licence.

Standard 2: Safety and order Prisons should be able to show evidence that family or other supportive relationships play a role in intelligence gathering regarding a prisoner's mental health, drug use (prescription and illicit), propensity to violence and risk to self.

Standard 3: Reform Given their role in prisoner rehabilitation, a standardised visitors' survey should be developed to capture the experiences of families as they seek to maintain contact and to enable comparison between different establishments.

Standard 4: Preparing for life after prison Prisons should be able to show how many prisoners do not receive visits.

Collecting information

The report notes that data gathering about family needs for prisoners is crucial to achieving the recommended standards and demonstrating improvements in outcomes. While prisons currently gather most information about family ties on reception to prison, the report suggests that this information should be gathered and assessed as a dynamic, ongoing and thorough process through all custodial journeys because family circumstances are changing all the time.

Key recommendation:

Contact details of family and significant others to be mandatorily requested by prisoner escort services before a prisoner leaves court and immediately added to his prison file, with this and other information on key relationships updated on an ongoing basis and sent with him when he moves establishments.

It also touches upon how this information should be collected, noting that prisoners can often find it easier to share personal information with staff from voluntary organisations than with prison officers. It highlights a good practice example at HMP Winchester, where staff from voluntary sector organisation Spurgeons⁶ carry out first night screening, which includes detailed questions about parenting responsibilities. This allows Spurgeons to follow up with information and support for fathers serving prison sentences.

3. Empowered governors

The report examines the role of empowered governors in shifting the culture of their prisons towards one that is more family-friendly and aware of the importance of the prisoners' families and other relationships for their rehabilitation. It provides an overview of the increased autonomy governors now have over their workforce planning, service provision, budgets and operational decision-making and offers family work at HMP Parc as an example of greater freedom leading to better practice.

Consistent leadership

Lord Farmer raises concerns about the high level of churn in governor positions, meaning that even where good family work has been developed due to the commitment of a governor, this governor will often move onto another position before the changes have become embedded.

11. Governors should be intentional about ensuring all prisoners who do not have family or other support - for example if they have been in the care system - are helped to form relationships with people outside or peers inside.

12. To support them in this, the body that considers 'what works' to rehabilitate offenders should examine the effectiveness of models that help prisoners without supportive relationships to develop these, or to reconnect safely with family and others from their past.

13. The Ministry of Justice should make a fund available that governors can bid for to trial innovations that engage with families specifically in order to prevent suicide.

14. As part of their Performance Agreement, each prison should establish a clear, auditable and responsive 'gateway' communication system for families and significant others - a dedicated phone line that is listened to and acted upon. As part of this:

- Families' concerns about mental and physical health should be properly recorded and action taken
- Families (and significant others) should be properly informed about the opening of an Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) document and able to request the opening of an ACCT document
- If, after the completion of a risk-based assessment an ACCT document is opened, they should be kept appropriately updated of any intervention/action arising from this
- If, after the completion of a risk-based assessment, it is decided not to open an ACCT document, then the family member or other person who raised the matter should be written to detailing the reason for the decision.

15. Development of leaders and staff must support governors in fulfilling their Performance Agreement requirement to provide a staffing structure that makes family work an operational priority:

- Given that family work has been characterised by unacceptable levels of inconsistency across the estate, the leadership capability strategy referred to in the white paper should make this area of responsibility a priority.

- **Standard 2:** Safety and order Prisons should be able to show evidence that family or other supportive relationships play a role in intelligence gathering regarding a prisoner's mental health, drug use (prescription and illicit), propensity to violence and risk to self.
 - **Standard 3:** Reform Given their role in prisoner rehabilitation, a standardised visitors' survey should be developed to capture the experiences of families as they seek to maintain contact and to enable comparison between different establishments.
 - **Standard 4:** Preparing for life after prison Prisons should be able to show how many prisoners do not receive visits.
5. Prison performance measures, which would enable comparisons to be made with similar prisons for the purposes of learning from practice, should include a family related measure such as rate of prisoners who receive visits on entry and exit and rate of prisoners engaged with their family, or other supportive relationships, on entry and exit.
6. Contact details of family and significant others should be mandatorily requested by prisoner escort services before a prisoner leaves court and immediately added to his prison file, with this and other information on key relationships updated on an ongoing basis and sent with him when he moves establishments.
7. If a prisoner cannot name anyone he will want to contact on the first night this should be flagged and active steps taken to try to reconnect him with family or others with whom he might be able to develop a supportive relationship.
8. Empowered governors' tenures should be of sufficient duration to demonstrate that they have added value to the prison, as Performance Agreements last for three years this should be the minimum length (apart from in exceptional circumstances).
9. When governors are in the process of making a decision about granting ROTL, family ties and supportive relationships should be one of the considerations.
10. Men who are eligible for ROTL should be able to attend visits outside the prison gate, whether on approved premises or in the wider community.

Key recommendation:

Empowered governors' tenures should be of sufficient duration to demonstrate that they have added value to the prison: as Performance Agreements last for three years this should be the minimum length (apart from in exceptional circumstances).

Release on temporary licence

The report is enthusiastic about the potential of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) to benefit prisoners' resettlement through enabling them to build closer ties with their family, as evidenced by a joint paper by Clinks and the Prison Reform Trust.⁷ Noting the very high rate of compliance with ROTL terms,⁸ Lord Farmer suggests that ROTL can give prisoners

the opportunity to adjust gradually to family life outside of prison and to spend more time in responsible roles such as parent or partner. It could also enable them to be more involved in their children's education through attending parent-teacher evenings or meetings at school.

Key recommendation:

When governors are in the process of making a decision about granting ROTL, family ties and supportive relationships should be one of the considerations.

Improving visits

Visits were one of the most important topics raised by prisoners and families responding to the review, who reported that face-to-face contact was the best way to develop family ties. While understanding of the need for security, families responding to the review often felt as though they were treated as criminals and found security checks frightening and stigmatising.

The report points towards practice in Belgian and Dutch prisons to make visits childcentred, such as a service delivered by a voluntary organisation that allows a parent in prison to have a child-centred visit without any other family members present and in an environment where security is unobtrusive. It notes that Barnardo's perform a similar role in some UK prisons, supporting men in prison to prepare for a childcentred visit, where the child's mother is unable or reluctant to attend the prison.

The report points out that the Prison Safety and Reform white paper suggests upcoming changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme, the national behaviour management system used by prisons to reward

prisoners for good behaviour and discipline them for misbehaviour. Currently, while there is a basic legal entitlement to a set number of visits, this number can be increased in line with the IEP scheme. This means that visits can be reduced and cancelled with little or no notice for families; organisations responding to the review were particularly concerned about the impact of this unpredictability on children of prisoners. Although the report does not make a recommendation about linking visits to the IEP scheme, Lord Farmer expresses a view that extended visits should not be dependent on behaviour, while standard visits should be at the discretion of the governor.

Supporting those with weak or complex family ties

As mentioned above, the Farmer Review was commissioned in part to provide information about men in prison without family ties and how they can be supported. It notes that in many prisons a significant percentage of prisoners receive no visits at all. This is often due to the nature of their offence, with men who have committed sexual offences making up a large portion of those with no family ties. However, a lack of family contact is also an issue for many care leavers, who make up 24% of the adult prison population. Care leavers are more likely to have experienced significant trauma and abuse and other disadvantage that can put them more at risk of violence, self-harm and suicide when in prison. As the Care Leavers' Association's evidence to the review showed, poor experience with 'corporate parents' (local authorities) can mean that care leavers come to prison isolated and with a lack of trust in statutory staff.

The report explores the possibility of supporting care leavers to make contact with estranged or distant family, or positive social contacts outside of the family. It makes reference to the Care Leavers' Association's recommendation that care leavers in prison have access to their local authority files in order to be able to identify contacts.

It also identifies sex offenders as a particularly isolated group, who often receive no family contact or have their family contact restricted due to the nature of their offences. For this group, and other prisoners with no social contacts outside of prison, the report highlights the importance of organisations providing mentoring services to ensure that men in prison and leaving prison have a network of social contacts to support them in their resettlement and hold them to account for their actions.

- The importance of 'Maintaining and developing family relationships' must be explicitly stated as part of the purpose of prison, to protect the agenda from being de-prioritised or dropped under future governments.
 - It should also be explicitly specified that the Performance Agreements the Secretary of State enters into with governors and executive governors of prison clusters must include a 'local family offer' to ensure that effective family work is delivered inside prisons.
 - The Performance Agreement with each prison should specify the following local family offer elements (with guidance from the Ministry of Justice) but detailed design and delivery to be at the broad discretion of Governors in each establishment:
 - a) Visitor base/centre and visiting services
 - b) Staffing structure to ensure family work is an operational priority
 - c) Extended visits
 - d) Family learning
 - e) 'Gateway' communication system
 - The Ministry of Justice should ensure that the importance of family ties is a golden thread running through the new policy frameworks based on the revised and pruned body of Prison Service Orders and Prison Service Instructions and also Probation Instructions.
 - Governors to be held to account for positive family work outcomes.
2. Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons must ensure the importance of family ties features prominently throughout the new Expectations currently being refined, so empowered governors know this has to be a cross-cutting priority in the running of their prison.
3. To improve the use of evidence and data, the body that considers 'what works' to rehabilitate offenders should also act as a repository of information about effective family work.
4. Family work should be included in all four standards in the white paper.
- **Standard 1:** Public protection Policy frameworks should require evidence of the involvement of families or other supportive relationships in sentence planning, resettlement planning and decisions regarding the use of ROTL.

- Governors should arrange, in collaboration with HMPPS Population Management Unit, to ensure prisoners moved out of the area are repatriated at the earliest opportunity to the prison region of their family and wider community (if beneficial to the successful completion of their individual sentence plan).

The role of technology

The report briefly considers the potential of technology in prisons, particularly new prisons, to support men to develop and maintain their family ties. The high cost of phone calls from prison was a recurring theme in responses to the review's call for evidence and the report addresses this through exploring opportunities for the use of in-cell telephony and video calls to allow greater and more flexible opportunities for family contact. While acknowledging the potential risks associated with developing greater access to technology in prison, the report finds that robust risk assessment would mitigate these. It suggests that a room could be made available within each prison for those whose family members cannot visit due to infirmity, distance or other factors to contact them through video calls.

Next steps

The report states that the Farmer Review will work with the MoJ to develop an action plan out of the report's recommendations and that the MoJ have agreed to share reviews of outcomes relating to this action plan with Lord Farmer twice a year to ensure the recommendations are properly implemented and progressed. The review team, led by Lord Farmer and including Clinks, is currently working with the MoJ to support them in putting together this plan.

In the coming months, Clinks will continue to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the report to the voluntary sector, senior leaders in prisons and government officials.

Appendix: Full list of recommendations

1. There should be a clear and simple structure for accountability as regards prisoners' contact and relationships with their family.

- The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice to be made responsible for ensuring prisoners' family ties are consistently treated as important across the estate by including them in his accountabilities.

Key recommendation:

Governors should be intentional about ensuring all prisoners who do not have family or other support - for example if they have been in the care system - are helped to form relationships with people outside or peers inside.

4. Safe and secure prisons

The report discusses the fundamental importance of family ties to ensuring prisons are safe. Lord Farmer states that safety was at the top of the agenda for all the staff and prisoners he met. Evidence submitted to the review demonstrated that prisoners with more stable family relationships were more likely to be stable prisoners inside prisons and those without regular family contact were more vulnerable to suicide and self-harm.

Key recommendation:

The Ministry of Justice should make a fund available that governors can bid for to trial innovations that engage with families specifically in order to prevent suicide.

The review finds that families are often unable to communicate their concerns about the mental wellbeing or physical safety of a prisoner to prisons or, when communication was possible, that they are not taken seriously. Many families felt that they could provide important insights into a person's mental health, particularly when their family member was too unwell to disclose their mental illness to prison staff. Inquest's casework, which was submitted to the review, gave many examples of concerns from families not being acted upon, with fatal consequences.

The local family offer recommended by the report is designed to address these issues through requiring prisons to have a gateway communication system for families to report concerns about a prisoner's safety. It also makes an additional recommendation to encourage governors to utilise family ties in innovative ways to improve safety.

5. Developing leaders and staff

The report looks at the central role of staff skills and culture in embedding family ties into rehabilitative work in prisons. Recognising the problem of understaffing in the prison estate, it welcomes the Prison Safety and Reform white paper's commitments to develop a prison leadership programme, introduce an improved induction and support programme for staff and ensure that each prisoner has a personal officer able to provide daily support.

Staff training

The report emphasises that staff training must ensure that staff value the positive role that families play in rehabilitation and understand the specific difficulties facing care leavers in prison. It suggests that each prison officer should receive an annual refresher course on these issues.

Key recommendation:

The development of leaders and staff must support governors in fulfilling their Performance Agreement requirement to provide a staffing structure that makes family work an operational priority:

- The new leadership programme should give governors a solid grasp of the impressive evidence base that shows good relationships with families and others are key to rehabilitation and reducing intergenerational offending.
- Personal officer job descriptions must include developing personal relationships with their prisoners and their training must reverse the de-skilling that has prevented many from undertaking informal support for prisoners' family and other relational ties.
- As a quarter of prisoners were formerly in the care of the local authority, personal officer training must also include awareness of how to help them with the psychological and other issues care-experienced men often face. These can affect their ability to form the relationships that will help them to desist from offending and settle back into the community after their sentence.

Partnership work for staff development

The report explores the value of partnership work in shifting towards a rehabilitation culture that recognises the importance of family ties. It discusses the essential role played by the voluntary sector in initiating change in this area and suggests that its work has been most effective when carried out in partnership with senior leaders in prisons. The report suggests that prison officers could gain more insight into family work through experience in the voluntary sector, and that prison governors should aim to inform themselves about the expertise of the local and regional voluntary sector organisations available to them. It gives examples of prison officers who have moved into the voluntary sector and a prison that has seconded a prison officer to their voluntary sector run visitors' centre.

Clinks has piloted the role of a voluntary sector coordinator in three prisons and will publish an evaluation report of this project in autumn 2017, providing further evidence and recommendations for how prisons can work in partnership with the voluntary sector to improve outcomes.⁹

6. Building the right estate for reform

The report looks at the MoJ's plans to build nine new prisons by 2020, as announced in the Prison Safety and Reform white paper, viewing this as an opportunity to establish the principle that family and relational ties should be an important factor in decisionmaking processes about where, and how, prisons are built and prisoner movement.

Family impact assessments

The report considers prison building a major policy decision and discusses the need to carry out the Family Test that government departments are required to carry out on proposed policies and publish as a family impact assessment.

'The objective of the Test is to introduce an explicit family perspective to the policy making process, and ensure that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning are made explicit and recognised in the process of developing new policy.' - DWP Family Test Guidance.¹⁰

Key recommendation:

All new-build prisons should be subject to the Government's Family Test and required to produce a family impact assessment, which should be published.

Distance and family ties

Significant issues were raised by families and men in prison about the distance families are often required to travel to visit their family members in prison and the huge financial strain this puts on families. The report highlights Lord Woolf's recommendation that prisoners should be helped to maintain their links with family and community by being held in community prisons as near to their homes as possible, expressing concern that this principle of localisation is not adequately followed through in practice.

Key recommendation:

Consideration should be given to the closeness of family or other supportive relationships as part of any proposed movements of prisoners out of their home region.