

Safeguarding for Prison Visiting

VISIT PRISONERS DURING A CATHOLIC SERVICE

Each visit has to be planned well in advance. Inform the chaplain at least a week ahead about who will be attending. The personal information to be provided will be determined by the chaplain, who will pass this on to the prison security. Usually, you will need ID with your address on it (Driving Licence or Passport). Arrive 45mn before your appointment to allow time to book in and security search. A rota can be set up for members to visit every 2 weeks.



YOU ARE A GUEST

Remember that you are a guest of the Prison Chaplain. Generally you are not allowed to take anything into the prison. This includes handkerchiefs, tissues and smart watches. Some prisons allow your car/house keys and wallets. Please check with the chaplain/prison security. Some prisons will provide a locker to deposit your phone, keys and small personal belongings, before you enter the prison. If not, the chaplain will have access to a locker.



YOUR DRESSCODE

Be conscious of what you wear.

Avoid wearing expensive watches, jewellery or branded items.
Do not wear tight or revealing clothes.
Avoid using strong perfumes or aftershaves.



INTERACTION WITH INMATES

Be mindful of what information you reveal. You can share your name and conference, but nothing more identifying. In your conversation with a prisoner, be led by them. Consider what questions you ask. We are not there to judge, but to support. If a prisoner makes a request or divulges confidential information, this must be passed on to the chaplain. Do not promise a prisoner anything, but say you will pass it on to the chaplain. You can shake hands with a prisoner if they initiate this. Try to avoid any other physical contact.



SECURITY SEARCHES

The security procedure is similar to that provided at an airport. Some prison have a scanner, others have sniffing dogs. You will be patted and searched by a female (females and male visitors) or male officer (male visitors). Any accidental items found on you might be binned.



OUR VINCENTIAN VALUES



Christ Centred

The St Vincent de Paul Society acknowledges the presence of Christ everywhere.



Compassionate

We aim to show a compassion that is non-judgmental towards those with whom we work.



Respectful

We respect the dignity of all in the knowledge that we are all equal.



If a disturbance happens, remain calm and let the staff handle it.



VISIT AN INDIVIDUAL IN PRISON

- Members wishing to visit an individual prisoner (under sentence or on remand) must comply with the prison regulations for that establishment (each prison may well be slightly different).
- Information on prison visiting can be read on www.gov.uk/prison-visits. Booking a visit is either via the website for each prison establishment or made by the prisoner.
- Members should always inform the conference of their intention to visit an individual prisoner in prison.
- Make sure you take with you a photo ID and another proof of address.

WHEN MEMBERS HELPS A VULNERABLE FAMILY MEMBER TO VISIT A RELATIVE IN PRISON.



- Complete an assessment of all risks involved and discuss arrangements with other agencies or social services, if and as necessary.
- Travel in pairs with that vulnerable family member. Members need not enter the prison visiting facility, unless this is requested and necessary to assist that vulnerable person and only if prior arrangements have been made with that prison.

A FAMILY MEMBER ASKING FOR GOODS TO BE GIVEN TO A PRISONER OR VICE VERSA

- A member **MUST NEVER** take any goods to a prisoner or from a prisoner to a family.
- Those wishing to send goods to a prisoner **MUST** adhere to the published rules applicable to each prison. Contact the chaplain to understand the process of the specific prison.



SENDING LETTERS, EMAILS OR CARDS TO PRISONERS



- Letter or email writing to prisoners is a very good idea. See **Contact a Prisoner fact sheet** which explain the 2 ways to go about it on the SVP website.
- It is encouraged that prisoners receive Christmas and Easter Cards from a conference especially the friendless or those without families (provided such cards are not personalised and exclude all pictures of children, carry no glitter and comply with prison regulations). You can also sometimes donate chocolates or small gifts (puzzle books, socks...) through the chaplaincy team.

PRISONER MAKING A TELEPHONE CALL

A prisoner can only use a prison phone – not a smuggled mobile and only to people named on that prisoner's list of family and friends. Prison staff can listen and record most telephone calls. **Do not give your personal number but use a conference mobile if possible.**



REQUEST TO ARRANGE ACCOMMODATION FOR A PRISONER ON RELEASE

Probation services usually provides accommodation for ex-offenders. If a B&B is needed, a conference or the SVP Working With Prison group can pay for emergency accommodation directly. Do not give money to an offender or his/her family, always pay the accommodation directly, by phone or online. Email prisonwork@svp.org.uk if funding is needed.



AN OFFENDER REQUESTS TRANSPORT AND / OR VARIOUS FORMS PRACTICAL HELP UPON RELEASE.

- Members responding to such a request should refer to the Chaplaincy team's risk assessment and agree appropriate travel plans, in pairs, to be submitted to the prison / probation officer or other agencies and always obtain appropriate vehicle insurance for passengers. A taxi could also be booked for the individual and paid by a conference.
- Members should be aware that clever grooming techniques might be used to encourage more and more little favours that can escalate rapidly and potentially turn to blackmail.
- If a sex offender, more information and enhanced screening by chaplain is needed.

CONFERENCE OR COUNCIL WISHING TO DONATE 'CHRISTMAS GOODIES', CHOCOLATES AT EASTER, CLOTHING, RELIGIOUS ITEMS AND LITERATURE?

- There is no obvious risk as such would be agreed beforehand by the chaplaincy team and prison security.
- There are strict rules for clothes property where prisoners can only order new items, not gifted clothes, unless the prisoner is on remand. Check the specific prison's regulations with the Chaplain.



HOLDING AND SHARING OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION WITH OTHERS

- Never, under any circumstances, discuss information about a person in prison or a former prisoner with any others outside the Society or in a public place, either in person or on the telephone.
- Completely anonymise any retained shared information that is no longer current.