Recognising Quality

An Evaluation Toolkit for Prison Visitors' Centres

3rd edition
Revised 2011

Action for Prisoners' Families   pact Prison Advice & Care Trust   charities evaluation services

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

RECOGNISING QUALITY:
An Evaluation Tool for Prison Visitors' Centres

Supporting offenders' relationships with their families has always been recognised as important by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). Crucial to this is the quality of services provided to visitors in prison establishments. In 1998, in partnership with voluntary organisations, the Prison Service published a Good Practice Guide to Prison Visitors' Centres and the publication by Action For Prisoners' Families and Pact of 'Recognising Quality', as a practical framework for developing and auditing good practice, followed on from this. It is hugely encouraging that since then, often as result of effective partnerships between the voluntary sector and NOMS, more visitors' centres have opened offering an increasingly wide range of services that support family ties, safer custody and rehabilitation. NOMS has recently developed new national minimum standards for services to visitors which will form the basis of all future contracts for provision of visitors' centre services and have revised the Prison Service Instruction 'Providing Visits and Services to Visitors'. This revision of 'Recognising Quality' will complement this work and offer invaluable guidance to all providers and prison staff.

I commend 'Recognising Quality' to you as an excellent tool for developing good practice across the prison estate and we are indebted to the visitors' centre managers and voluntary organisations who contributed to its development and piloting.

Michael Spurr

Chief Executive

National Offender Management Service

February 2011

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Introduction

This 2011 edition – the third – of 'Recognising Quality' has been updated by Action for Prisoners' Families (APF) and the Charities Evaluation Service (CES).

In 1998 the Visitors' Centres Good Practice Guidelines were developed jointly by the Prison Service and the voluntary sector, to provide practical guidance on setting up a visitors' centre. In 2001 APF and the Prison Reform Trust published 'Just Visiting?' a review of the role of prison visitors' centres which outlined how centres, specifically those which were managed for the prison through voluntary sector partnerships, were evolving and providing a diverse range of services to meet the needs of visitors visiting an ever increasing prison population. One of the 'Just Visiting?' recommendations was that quality standards should be made available to promote the development of good practice and enable service providers to demonstrate the value and quality of their work.

'Recognising Quality' was first published in 2003 by APF and the Prison Advice & Care Trust (pact), advised by a working group of visitors' centre managers, in response to this recommendation. A training programme on implementing the new toolkit was also developed. The toolkit was produced with CES as a tailored version of PQASSO, the leading quality system within the voluntary sector. This updated version conforms to the latest (third) edition of PQASSO.

In the years since 'Recognising Quality' was first published there has been a growing understanding of the value of provision for children and families visiting prisons. The recent focus on rehabilitation acknowledges the important role of families;

a government cross departmental Families of Offenders Board has been established; the new prison specifications include a suite of specifications for the whole visits experience: for visits booking arrangements, visitors' centres and the visits themselves.

Prison visitors' centres continue to improve and extend their services. Their commitment to providing a welcoming, safe place for visitors which values them as individuals has enabled many to become an effective environment for children and families to access play activities, parenting support, relationships skills, healthy living and a wide range of specialist information and advice.

We are delighted to be publishing this revised version of 'Recognising Quality'. It provides the means to recognise the quality of even the most basic services a visitors' centre may provide. Importantly it allows you to identify areas for future development and provide accurate information about your work to the Prison Service, Ministry of Justice, commissioners and funders.

We hope you will share our enthusiasm when working through the toolkit and find it helpful in the valuable work you do.

March 2011

How to use this booklet

The different sections

'Recognising Quality' has five sections. These cover all the main things you need to attend to in order to run a Centre well and achieve good results for your visitors.

Sections one, two and three contain quality standards designed to help you take a systematic look at what you do and to help you decide exactly where improvements may be needed. These standards will help you plan and allocate the resources to make necessary changes to your Centre over a realistic period.

This does not mean that your work is not already of a high standard. However well you are doing, an improvement process allows you to respond systematically and consistently to the changing needs of your visitors and to internal and external demands.

Section four is about everything that your Centre achieves. Self assessment against the quality standards in sections one, two and three will help show you whether you have put into the Visitors' Centre all the elements that will provide a quality service for visitors, for the prison, and for other groups of people and agencies you work with. All these things – the planning, the management, staffing, your processes and procedures – enable the Centre to achieve results.

Section five focuses on collecting information about what your Visitors' Centre achieves. It describes the range of information that you might collect and how you might do it. To find out about the Centre's results, you will need to gather some information systematically and routinely, that is, to monitor aspects of your work. You will also need to do some evaluation. Evaluation is when you gather together all the information you have and make a judgement. The evidence you have must be strong enough for you to draw valid and reliable conclusions.

The standards

The standards contained in this framework can best be described as promises you make to yourselves, your visitors and others about how you go about your work. To make it easier to check how well you are meeting them, each standard has a set of criteria against which you review your working practice. By doing this, you will gain an overview of your strengths and areas where you would like to develop further or need to make changes.

The criteria under each standard have been written under two headings; essential and good practice. Essential criteria refer to working practices which any Centre should have in place, although some areas may not apply to your Centre. These criteria help you to comply with the law and address the basic needs of your visitors and the people within your organisation. They form a solid foundation on which you can build.

The good practice criteria give you some examples of good practice under each of the topic areas. Centres may differ in their services and delivery style to suit the prison and visitors, and you may feel these criteria are not relevant to your Centre. You may also want to implement good practice not mentioned here.

The self-assessment process

Self assessment against an agreed set of quality standards will give you information about how your Centre is doing, both in the way you provide your services and in the way you run your organisation. Having a clear picture of your strengths and weaknesses will help you to focus your attention on those aspects you consider a priority. The purpose of self assessment is to gather sufficient information from a range of sources and to include

the perspectives of the people who have an interest in your organisation.

Start with making improvements in one or two areas. Take on more areas gradually so that the process is manageable.

You need to find a way of carrying out a self assessment that works for you. However the following steps may be a helpful guide.

A Step by Step Guide

Step 1

Familiarise yourself with the standards and the overall process described in the framework. Develop an implementation plan to guide you along the way. Get the people you need on board and put time aside. It will be less daunting if people know they don't have to tackle all four sections together.

Step 2

You may wish to carry out an initial self assessment to help you decide which quality standards to start with. This initial self assessment will help you decide what you already have in place and locate your gaps. Using this information as a basis, you can then decide what standards you would like to prioritise.

You can begin working on any number of standards at any one time. However, remember that you need to be realistic about what you can achieve within a specific time frame.

Step 3

Once you have decided which standards you are going to begin with, do a more detailed self assessment against those standards.

Find the example self-assessment sheet provided at the end of sections one, two and three. You will need to reproduce this sheet for each quality area, so that you have sufficient space to record the results of your discussions. Remember to indicate which section and which standard the information relates to.

Read through the standard carefully and then move on to the criterion. Address each criteria individually. How well does your Centre meet each criterion?

Once you have addressed all the essential criteria you may wish to consider the good practice. Alternatively you may want to come back to it at a later date.

Agree on how you are doing, and discuss what you may do to further develop or improve. The purpose is to recognise what you are already achieving and to generate good ideas and plans.

Evidence

Objective evidence is used to demonstrate that your Centre has met the requirements contained within each quality standard. To help you, the framework provides you with examples of sources of evidence. When working with the framework, you may have other evidence. Use this as long as the evidence is helpful, relevant, up-to-date and people know about it.

Reviewing the sources of evidence will involve asking a number of questions about the quality of the evidence itself. For example, for evidence that is written down in a document, you might check whether the evidence is 'CARD':

C **Consistent** – Is practice consistent with policy and procedures? When evidence is collated, do documents complement and not contradict other documents?

A **Accessible** – Are all relevant staff, Board members, volunteers and users aware of the existence of the evidence and where they can find it?

R **Recent** – Is the evidence up to date? Has it been recently developed or reviewed?

D **Dated** – Do you know when the evidence dates from? Is there a date on it?

Step 4

You would not realistically be able to resource all the improvements generated in your list. So, the next step is to decide priorities. The example action plan provided makes provision for defining your priorities as H (high), M (medium) and L (low).

To help you prioritise, you may wish to establish some criteria against which you review each action on your list. For example, one criteria may be your funder's priorities. Another criteria may be that you have already begun in some way.

Step 5

Generate a plan for how you would like to implement your improvements. Link your plans to your year plans and allocate the necessary time and other resources.

Establishing a review and improvement cycle
Decide how often your Centre will review improvements made and work on more of the quality standards. It will be helpful to have a routine review cycle, say, every year. Set a timetable against which you will work through all the quality standards relevant to your Centre. You will then be able to continue your cycle of review and improvement across the whole range of quality standards.

Section One:
Managing a Visitors' Centre

1. Planning for quality

2. Management and governance

3. Staff and volunteers

4. Managing resources

5. Managing money

6. Monitoring and evaluation

7. Example Self assessment and action plan sheets

This section will help you:

- Assess how well you are planning your services and activities.
- Assess and make improvements to how your Centre is managed and governed.
- Improve the way you recruit, support and develop your staff and volunteers.
- Get the most out of your resources and income.
- Assess how well you keep track of what you are doing and what you are achieving.

1 Planning for quality

The Centre has a clearly defined mission, values and broad aims which are clear to staff, volunteers and managing body. All plans are based on information collected, including information on the needs of families of prisoners and other visitors. The Centre involves visitors and the prison, as appropriate, when deciding its priorities and in reviewing its progress.

Essential Criteria

1. The mission, values and aims and roles of the Centre are established in consultation with the managing body, staff and the Prison Service.
2. Specific aims and intended outcomes are clear and based on the status of the prison and known needs of visitors.
3. Monitoring Information collected is used for future planning.
4. Opportunities are created for joint planning between the Centre, the prison and other funders where appropriate.
5. Plans include fundraising, organising human resources, and how you work with other agencies.

Good practice

1. Visitors are involved in developing plans for the Centre.
2. Information from prison inspection reports and on the needs of families of prisoners are used for planning and developing the Centre.
3. Longer-term plans lead to targeted fundraising and the development of services.

Suggested evidence

1. The governing document (constitution, memorandum and articles of association, or rules). Mission statement. Publicity materials
2. Statement of aims and intended outcomes. Records of feedback and suggestions from users, and of consultations with users.
3. Operational plan. Analysis of monitoring information.
4. Records of planning meetings and discussions with other organisations. Partnership agreements.
5. Operational plan, strategic plan, working agreements with other agencies/commissioners.

Good practice

1. Records of feedback from visitors. Complaints and suggestions. Results of visitor satisfaction surveys. Minutes of meetings and discussions with visitors.
2. Inspection reports. Records of visitor feedback from planning meetings.
3. Working with your funder or commissioner. Strategic plan.

2 Management and governance

The managing body is clear about its roles and responsibilities, and is well informed about the work of the Centre and ensures that the Centre is governed efficiently and effectively. Sound management policies and systems are in place to support staff and volunteers. Managers actively promote good communication.

Essential Criteria

1. The managing body is clear about its responsibilities and powers in line with the Centre's governing document.
2. The managing body receive an induction and are well-informed about the work and potential of the Centre.
3. The managing body meets regularly, and at least quarterly with accurate minutes recording decisions and agreed action points.
4. The managing body and centre manager ensure that the Centre meets all legal and constitutional requirements.
5. A designated governor and prison representatives regularly attend meetings of the managing body or consultative group.
6. The Centre fosters good communication internally and with the managing body, and between the Centre and visitors, the prison and other agencies.
7. A range of clear policies, procedures and systems are in place and communicated to staff, volunteers and visitors.
8. Suggested additional indicator: Managers lead by example, providing clear direction, coaching and support

Suggested Evidence

1. The governing document. Documents about managing body members' responsibilities.
2. Induction information for new managing body members.
3. Board minutes.
4. Documents relating to legal, financial and contractual requirements.
5. Board minutes. Records of meetings.
6. Internal memos, circulars, minutes, reports, notices, newsletters and bulletins.
7. Documented policies and procedures.
8. Internal memos, circulars, minutes, reports, notices, newsletters and bulletins.

Good practice

1. Training and induction of managing body members includes: roles and responsibilities; key policies and procedures; the prison regime; issues affecting prisoners' families.
2. Key elements of policies and procedures are communicated in clear English and in appropriate languages in leaflets and posters.
3. Centre information is kept distinct and separate from prison information.
4. A handbook containing all policies and procedures is available for reference.
5. Visitors themselves help to define the range of services and influence the management of the Centre.

Good practice

1. Induction training records and induction pack.
2. Documented policies and procedures appropriately displayed.
3. Prison information identified and displayed separately from Centre information.
4. Staff and volunteer handbook.
5. Needs assessments and results of surveys.

3 Staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers are recruited and supported in line with the needs of the Centre and its visitors. People at all levels within the organisation are trained and supported to equip them to meet the demands of the service

Essential Criteria

1. The recruitment and selection processes for both paid staff and volunteer posts are clear and follow all equality and diversity requirements.
2. There is a person specification for paid staff and volunteers that makes clear the qualities, interpersonal and other skills required.
3. Each paid member of staff has a contract, written terms and conditions of employment and a job description.
4. A range of documented human resource policies and procedures are in place and are accessible to all staff and volunteers.
5. Staff pay, benefits, and terms and conditions are appropriate for the levels of responsibility and comparable to recognised pay scales.
6. The Centre has a clear policy and procedure outlining the involvement of volunteers. Volunteers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and these are documented.
7. All new people, including managing body members and volunteers, receive induction. Staff, volunteers and Board members and have fair access to training and other learning opportunities as appropriate.
8. Regular meetings are held with staff and volunteers to discuss the Centre's activities.
9. Staff and volunteers receive individual support and supervision in carrying out their work.

Suggested Evidence

1. Policy and procedure documents relating to recruitment. Advertisements for staff and volunteers, application forms and interview questions.
2. Person specification.
3. Written contracts with terms and conditions of employment and job descriptions.
4. Documented human resource policies and procedures. A staff and volunteer handbook.
5. Pay scales and terms and conditions. Benchmarking records
6. Volunteer policies. Documented volunteer role description.
7. Records of induction. Induction packs. Records of training events and other learning opportunities attended.
8. Minutes of meetings and discussions.
9. Records of supervision.

Good practice

1. Key competences are identified and staff and volunteers are skilled or have the opportunity to receive relevant training.
2. There are regular support and supervision sessions and annual appraisals for all staff. Volunteers receive regular support. Appraisals for all staff. Volunteers receive regular support.

Good practice

1. Job descriptions and person specifications, training needs assessments and training records.
2. Appraisal forms, records of supervision sessions, records of appraisals, records of supervision, records of action points arising from meetings and discussions.

4 Managing resources

The Centre premises are well maintained and offer a welcoming and comfortable environment for visitors. There are facilities to meet the needs of visitors and their children. Information and other resources are managed efficiently and economically. All legal obligations are met. The Centre manages resources in ways which minimise any negative impact on the environment.

Essential Criteria

1. Adequate resources are negotiated to deliver the service, including staffing, premises and recurring costs.
2. Premises are accessible and meet all legal requirements, including fire, health and safety, and disability discrimination legislation and regulations.
3. The Centre offers a safe, secure and welcoming environment. It is warm, well-ventilated and well-lit by natural light.
4. Equipment is regularly maintained and easily used by staff and volunteers.
5. Premises are well maintained and provide adequate space to offer services.
6. Personal and sensitive information is managed in accordance with data protection legislation, and all information stored electronically is backed up.
7. Basic records on supply and delivery are kept.
8. Supplies and equipment are stored in a safe and secure place.
9. All insurance requirements are up-to-date including cover for people, vehicles and contents.
10. The Centre considers its environmental responsibilities, and takes steps to save energy, reduce waste, re-use or recycle materials, and shop ethically.

Suggested Evidence

1. Plans, which include resources. Budget reflecting work plans including premises and recurring costs.
2. Accessible premises with certificates and relevant insurance documents on display and fire safety equipment.
3. Premises and surroundings which are safe and welcoming. Windows providing natural light.
4. Equipment servicing and maintenance records. Operating instructions.
5. Premises with sufficient space and separate rooms as appropriate.
6. Paper and/or electronic filing systems. Data protection registration certificate. Back-up of electronic information.
7. Purchasing records.
8. Lockable storage units.
9. Current insurance certificates.
10. Energy reducing materials, for example low-energy bulbs. Recycling schemes.

Good practice

1. The Centre is located in premises independent of the prison building.
2. The Centre is specifically designed to meet the needs of visitors, with designated play area and storage facilities, outdoor seating and providing privacy where confidentiality is essential.
3. Separate, accessible toilet provision is available for Centre visitors and there are separate facilities for men and women.
4. Information technology is used effectively.

Good practice

1. Premises independent from the prison.
2. Premises designed to meet needs as appropriate.
3. Separate and accessible toilets for men, women and staff.
4. Information technology and resource reviews.

5 Managing money

The Centre secures enough income to support its planned work and to be financially sustainable. Prudent budgeting and clear financial procedures ensure effective financial control, accountability to funder, commissioners, and compliance with the law.

Essential Criteria

1. The Centre meets all HM Revenue and Customs requirements.
2. The Centre meets the requirements of the law, regulatory standards and its governing document in generating income, and managing and accounting for money.
3. There are written procedures in place for handling, secure storage and banking of income, authorising payments, signing cheques, staff and volunteer expenses, petty cash, salaries, monitoring cash flow, purchasing, invoicing and credit control.
4. Responsibility for bookkeeping is separate from financial control.
5. The Centre meets the specific financial requirements of funders, for example, for claiming money, recording spending and reporting.
6. A realistic and affordable budget is agreed against which income and expenditure is regularly reviewed.
7. The managing body reviews the budget at least quarterly and reviews end-of-year management accounts and receives an annual financial audit report.
8. The Centre maintains good relations with funders and donors, to secure long-term sustainability.

Suggested Evidence

1. Tax, PAYE and VAT returns.
2. The governing document. Annual accounts in line with the SORP for charities and Company Law.
3. Written financial procedures.
4. Lists of financial duties are separated (for example book-keeping is separate from monitoring). Written financial procedures.
5. Applications for funding and records of spending.
6. Annual budget. Income and expenditure reports against the budget.
7. Minutes of managing body meetings. Audit reports.
8. Results of funding applications. Minutes of meetings with funders.

Good practice

1. Priorities and targets for fundraising are agreed for the year ahead.
2. Information technology is used to assist recording and monitoring of income and expenditure under itemised heads.
3. The Centre manages its bank accounts to make best use of its funds.

Good practice

1. Financial plans for the year ahead.
2. Computerised financial records.
3. Bank accounts offering good returns on investments.

6 Monitoring and evaluation

The Centre systematically collects sufficient information. Information on activities and on the use and benefits of services is analysed and used to determine how services to visitors may be improved.

Essential Criteria

1. Decisions about what to monitor and evaluate are based on an understanding of what the Centre and its stakeholders need to know.
2. There is a simple monitoring and evaluation system recording information about visitors, and measuring outputs and outcomes.
3. The Centre records and reports on formal and informal feedback from visitors about their experience of services, including complaints and suggestions.
4. A system exists for visitors to make complaints comments and suggestions and it is well publicised and easy to use.
5. Monitoring information is regularly brought together and analysed, feeding back into daily practice and informing management decisions.
6. Monitoring and evaluation findings are reported to the managing body and funders, and are used to improve activities and to plan for future development.

Good practice

1. The Centre includes the prison and visitors in planning evaluation priorities, evaluation questions and methods of collecting information.
2. The Centre builds its monitoring and evaluation skills and systems by accessing external information, training and other support.

Suggested Evidence

1. Records of discussions with board, staff and other stakeholders. Funding applications.
2. Completed monitoring forms. Collated statistics and qualitative information.
3. Records of complaints, suggestions and feedback from visitors.
4. Complaints policy or procedure displayed. Records of visitor feedback, suggestions and complaints.
5. Collated and reviewed monitoring information. Staff and team meeting minutes.
6. Reports to funders and managing body, and plans which include monitoring and evaluation findings.

Good practice

1. Minutes of evaluation planning meetings.
2. Records of training and access to publications. Support from funders, infrastructure organisations or consultants.

Self assessment sheet
Section 1

Quality standard: _____ Date _____

Essential:

Criteria	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Good practice:

Indicator	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Action plan

Level (please tick appropriate box)	Quality standard:
☐ Essential	_____
☐ Good practice	Date when action was agreed _____

Action agreed	Key person responsible	Completion date

Review date

Section Two: Principles

1. Visitor-centred service

2. Family-focused service

3. Confidentiality

4. Health and safety

5. Equal opportunities and diversity

This section will help you:

- Assess the key principles which underpin the way you deliver your services.
- Review how well you understand the needs of your visitors and are able to learn from them.
- Assess how safe and secure the environment is for your staff, volunteers and visitors.
- Review how well you are responding to the different needs of your visitors, staff and volunteers.

1 Visitor-centred service

The Visitors' Centre has a clear profile of its visitors and places them at the heart of the organisation. Visitors are provided with all the information they need. Visitors are involved wherever possible and appropriate in the design, delivery, and review of services in order to meet their needs.

Essential

1. The Visitors' Centre is well signposted and opening hours are clear and accurate.
2. The Centre is clear about the key messages it wants to communicate to visitors and other external stakeholders.
3. Staff are easily identifiable.
4. There are procedures for welcoming all visitors. Staff and volunteers are friendly, polite, informative, courteous and respectful to visitors.
5. There is a means of identifying new visitors. Procedures and services available are explained and key information is provided in appropriate formats for new visitors.
6. The Centre provides a reliable and consistent service based on visitors' needs.
7. Visitors are aware of the system for making complaints and suggestions about the Centre.
8. The Centre's role in providing feedback on the effectiveness of prison systems affecting visitors is recognised by the prison and suggestions are taken into consideration.
9. In the case of refusal of visits, the Centre has written information about the prison procedure and a protocol for Centre staff.

Suggested Evidence

1. Signposts and information about opening hours.
2. Publicity information, notes of staff and volunteer meetings.
3. Badges, name tags, photo-board.
4. Visitor procedures and polite and friendly staff and volunteers.
5. New visitor procedure and information leaflets and flyers.
6. Internal and external reports that raise concerns and issues affecting visitors.
7. Records of commendations, complaints and suggestions from visitors and complaints and suggestions procedure.
8. Minutes of meetings and discussions and records of reports to prison and action taken.
9. Policy and procedure for refusing a visit at the prison and visitors' centre.

Good practice

1. Visitors are told about the Centre in advance of their first visit and informed of its purpose, services provided and a contact number.
2. Welcome notices are available in key languages.
3. The Centre provides a direct method of booking visits, or provides a direct channel through to the prison booking authorities.
4. The Centre holds information about visitor profiles, obtaining information on gender, ethnicity, age, language and specific cultural and other needs.
5. Visitors are encouraged to participate in a visitors' forum or visitor group when appropriate.

Good practice

1. Pre-visit information leaflets and letters to new visitors.
2. Welcome notices in key languages.
3. Visits booking procedures or direct line to the prison's visitors booking office.
4. Visitor profile information and results of needs assessments.
5. Information about visitors' forums. Minutes of visitors' forums and visitor groups.

2 Family-focused service

The Centre focuses its services on the families of prisoners. Active steps are taken to provide a family friendly and positive experience when visiting the Centre. Good quality and attractive play materials are available. Staff and volunteers are trained to support family members and to help them and their children experience a positive visit.

Essential

1. The Centre focuses its core services on support for family members and carers and on preparation for resettlement.
2. The Centre recognises the social and emotional consequences for children and other relatives of imprisonment of family members.
3. The Centre's activities build awareness within the prison and the wider community of the impact of imprisonment on family members.
4. Information is available on the prison and prison visits in suitable language and formats for children and takes account of their specific needs.
5. The Centre provides baby changing and feeding areas.
6. Parents, grandparents and other relatives are aware of their continued responsibility for children while they are on the premises and in any outdoor play space.
7. The Centre's child protection policy and procedure relates to that of the prison and area social services department.
8. Staff and volunteers are trained and supported in child protection issues.

Suggested Evidence

1. Aims and objectives which focus on support for family members and resettlement.
2. Information on the effects of imprisonment of family members for children and other relatives and records of appropriate staff and volunteer training.
3. Minutes of meetings and discussions and related publicity.
4. Child-friendly information leaflets and flyers.
5. Baby changing and feeding facilities.
6. Information about play area for children and notices displayed.
7. Safeguarding children procedures.
8. Staff and volunteer training records.

Good practice

1. Provision is made to meet the needs of children with specific or special needs.
2. There is a named person with responsibility for child protection issues.
3. Consultation with visitors' includes all aspects of visits, family ties and resettlement.
4. Information is gathered on the number of children visiting, when they visit and their ages.

Good practice

1. Appropriate play materials and information and disabled access and toilets.
2. Staff records and job descriptions.
3. Minutes of meetings, discussions and visitors' forums, questionnaires and surveys.
4. Monitoring and 'snapshot' information.

3 Confidentiality

The Visitors' Centre provides a confidential service for all its visitors and makes this known. It ensures that all staff and volunteers understand and are committed to implementing its confidentiality policy. Systems are in place to protect the confidentially of visitors, prisoners and staff.

Essential

1. The Centre has a confidentiality policy and procedures, including details of the limits of that confidentiality and the circumstances in which it might be breached.
2. All managing body members, staff and volunteers receive a copy of the confidentiality policy and agree to work within it.
3. Steps are taken to ensure that staff, volunteers and visitors understand the confidentiality policy.
4. Notices about the Centre's confidentiality policy are clearly displayed in visitors' areas and the prison is informed of such policies.
5. There are systems in place to ensure the implementation of the confidentiality policy and the law on data protection in relation to telephone calls, email, and other correspondence.
6. Information about visitors is not passed on to prison staff without prior permission unless it endangers the safety of other visitors and staff.
7. Staff and volunteers receive training on professional boundaries.

Suggested Evidence

1. Confidentiality policy and procedure.
2. Staff, volunteer and managing body induction information and signed copies of confidentially policy.
3. Training records which include training on confidentiality and professional boundaries.
4. Information about the confidentiality policy clearly displayed and included in new visitors welcome procedures.
5. Staff and volunteers procedures manual.
6. Records of drug finds and action taken.
7. Staff and volunteers receive training on professional boundaries.

Good practice

1. Staff and volunteers are aware of the confidentiality policy of other agencies they are working with.

Good practice

1. Confidentiality policies of key contacts and minutes of meetings and discussions.

4 Health and safety

The Visitors' Centre provides a safe environment. It has healthy working conditions for its staff and volunteers. Staff, volunteers and managing body members know their obligations and carry out their duties responsibly.

Essential

1. The personal safety of staff and visitors is regarded as a priority. Panic buttons are appropriately placed and a protocol established with an agreed response from the prison.
2. The Centre has a clear policy on the minimum number of staff and the staff to volunteer ratio during opening hours.
3. There are documented procedures on health and safety, alarm and exit procedures, and all staff know about them.
4. All materials used, for example, in the play and refreshment areas, are to maximum safety standards.
5. The service area does not provide a safety risk for small children.
6. Notices are displayed on the safe use of equipment, good hygiene and health, and safety practice.
7. Appropriate staff are trained in first aid with access to well-maintained first aid kits in specific and named areas of the Centre.
8. Regular safety checks are made at specified intervals or times on general areas as well as specific areas, such as the play area and refreshment area.
9. Visitors are informed of security issues relating to visiting.
10. The kitchen and service area is secure, with a clear view from and to the Centre waiting area.
11. Security searches by prison staff take place only when the Centre is closed to the public.

Suggested Evidence

1. Health and safety policy and procedures, panic buttons and signed agreement with prison.
2. Health and safety policy.
3. Documented procedures and records of appropriate staff training.
4. Routine checks and records of risk audits in play and refreshment areas.
5. Routine checks and records of risk audits for all areas of the Centre.
6. Notices displayed in refreshment area.
7. Records of staff first aid training and first aid kits.
8. Records of safety checks.
9. Security information for visitors.
10. Safe and secure kitchen and service area.
11. Records of prison security searches.

Good practice

1. The Centre routinely receives prison information relevant to the safety and security of visitors, eg, statistics of drugs finds.
2. There is a Centre drug and alcohol information log which records finds and is reviewed regularly to monitor the effectiveness of current drug and alcohol prevention measures.
3. Staff receive training on managing aggression and potentially violent situations.

Good practice

1. Prison reports and statistics.
2. Drug and alcohol information log and appropriate monitoring information.
3. Training records.

5 Equal opportunities and diversity

The Centre and its staff and volunteers are committed to the development and promotion of equality of opportunity for all. Services and activities are designed to value and respect diversity. Staff and volunteers respond with sensitivity to the differing needs of visitors.

Essential

1. The Centre works to an equal opportunities policy, and resourcing equal opportunities is built into plans.
2. Equal opportunities are included in all induction training. Notices about the Centre's equal opportunities policy are displayed in visitors' areas.
3. The Centre has sufficient information about its visitor profile to plan and deliver services appropriately.
4. The Centre proactively recruits to reflect the diversity of its local community and visitor profile.
5. The Centre finds out about the information needs of those who do not read or write or do not speak English well and seeks a range of solutions.
6. The Centre's premises and facilities, including the provision of disabled toilet facilities, ramps and handrails are accessible to people with physical disabilities.
7. Visitors who are unable to read or write or who do not speak English well are consulted and surveyed.

Suggested Evidence

1. Equal opportunities policy, centre plans and budget.
2. Records of induction training and visitors information about equal opportunities.
3. Research reports, prison information, government statistics and monitoring information.
4. Recruitment records.
5. Needs assessment information, management reports and service plans.
6. Accessible premises and facilities and results from visitor feedback.
7. Results of needs assessments and visitor feedback.

Good practice

1. Written information for visitors is provided in plain English and accessible formats, taking into consideration specific language and other needs of visitors.
2. The Centre has a strategy for using translation and interpreting resources from the prison and community as necessary.
3. Materials, posters, books and equipment in children's play areas reflect diversity and provide positive images.
4. Where possible, the Centre displays visual images of key messages.
5. Facilities for prayer are provided.

Good practice

1. Information in appropriate format and languages.
2. Records of translation and interpreting services.
3. Positive images on display and variety of play materials.
4. Pictorial representations of key messages.
5. Prayer facilities.

Self assessment sheet
Section 2

Quality standard: _____ Date _____

Essential:

Criteria	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Good practice:

Indicator	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Action plan

Level (please tick appropriate box)

☐ **Essential**

☐ **Good practice**

Quality standard:

_____

Date when action was agreed

_____

Action agreed	Key person responsible	Completion date

Review date

Section Three: Services

1. Information and support
2. Liaison and advocacy
3. Refreshments
4. Play facilities
5. Working with the prison
6. Building relationships
7. Example self assessment and action plan sheets

This section will help you:

- Review the information and support provided to visitors and assess whether all visitors have equal access to your services.
- Consider how well you work with the prison and other agencies.
- Improve the working relationships you have with the prison, other agencies and the local community.
- Improve the range of facilities you offer to visitors.

1 Information and support

The Centre provides up-to-date and accurate information to visitors. A support service is provided focused on listening to visitors and recognising individual circumstances.

Essential

1. There is a dedicated telephone line to the Centre, with a message providing information about visit times and the Centre opening times.
2. Response to visitors' enquiries is clear and consistent.
3. Information provided to visitors is tailored to the type of prison and visitor group.
4. Information is accurate, kept up-to-date, and someone is given responsibility for keeping information current.
5. The Centre provides support to individuals and families on issues of concern for families, eg booking visits, support for travel costs, searching procedures, effects of imprisonment on families, drug related issues, resettlement, drug and alcohol harm reduction.
6. Staff provide support, which is focused on listening to visitors and recognising individual circumstances and needs.
7. Promotional materials give essential information about the services and facilities that are available, including how to contact the Centre.
8. The Centre's identity, legal status and contact details are included on all its stationery and publicity.

Suggested Evidence

1. Telephone line, e-mail address, and answering machine.
2. Telephone and e-mail enquiries log book, client contact sheets, records of face to face interventions.
3. Information leaflets and flyers.
4. Management reports, staff job descriptions and information leaflets.
5. Information leaflets, records of support sessions and referrals.
6. Feedback from visitors and staff which demonstrate active listening skills.
7. Posters leaflets, web pages about the Centre's services and facilities.
8. Letterheads, leaflets, e-mails.

Good practice

1. Information is available on DVD, CD or on-line, and is printed in a variety of languages.
2. Commonly required information is produced in poster form, using user-friendly, informal language.
3. Information on prisoners' daily life is readily available. This may be provided through photographs of cells, family induction, and family days.
4. Consideration is given to where information is displayed, particularly important or sensitive information.
5. There are opportunities for informal and formal peer support.
6. There are opportunities for outside agencies to disseminate information and support to visitors.

Good Practice

1. Information in languages other than English, DVDs, CDs and on-line.
2. Poster on display.
3. Posters, leaflets, web pages about the Centre's services and facilties.
4. Information on prison life and photographs.
5. Monitoring information and minutes of meetings.
6. Feedback from visitors and monitoring reports.

2 Liaison and Advocacy

There is good communication between the Centre and the prison. This enables the Centre to provide input into issues relevant to the families of prisoners and to pass concerns from visitors to the prison.

Essential

1. The Centre has an agreed point of contact with the prison. This is used as a two-way channel to communicate issues that may affect visits and visitors.
2. Centres provide information and input into prison issues that might affect the Centre, such as visiting times, searching policies and security procedures.
3. Centre staff are included on relevant committees in the prison, for example resettlement, suicide prevention, drug strategy.
4. The Centre has a recognised remit to pass concerns from families to the prison. Concerns might include feedback on a prisoner's risk of suicidal behaviour, mental health, bullying and other concerns.
5. The Centre facilitates dialogue between visitors and the prison on minor issues and complaints.

Good practice

1. A confidential complaints book is available in the Centre for recording comments on prison visits. All complaints and recommendations are passed to the prison.

Suggested Evidence

1. Minutes of meetings. Discussions and attendance records.
2. Reports to prison and minutes of meetings.
3. Staff representation at key committee meetings.
4. Records of complaints and suggestions, visitor feedback and reports to prison.

Good practice

1. Complaints policy and log book.

3 Refreshments

A wide choice of refreshments is provided for visitors. This will improve the quality of the visit. The refreshment area follows all legal and health and safety requirements.

Essential

1. The refreshment area is bright and welcoming, with opening times which coincide with visits and which are open before and after visits.
2. The area is well maintained and clean, complying with local authority environmental health and food hygiene regulations.
3. Staff working on refreshments attend food hygiene training.
4. The refreshment area maintains its own procedures manual, to include purchasing, cash handling, first aid, hygiene, health and safety, and staffing.
5. The range of refreshments reflects visitors' different cultural, religious and financial needs.
6. Prices are clearly displayed.

Good practice

1. A choice of freshly made hot and cold food is available.

Suggested Evidence

1. Welcoming refreshment area.
2. Health and safety procedure and records.
3. Staff food hygiene training records.
4. Procedures manual.
5. Refreshments that cater for a variety of dietary and cultural needs.
6. Clearly displayed prices.

Good practice

1. Hot and cold refreshments.

4 Play facilities

Play areas are clearly defined and provide a safe space for children and toddlers. A range of safe and attractive play materials, books and equipment are provided.

Essential

1. Play areas, whether within the Centre or the Visits Hall, are clearly defined, designed to provide a safe and secure environment for small children and have use of secure storage.
2. A range of good quality, fun, attractive play materials, books and equipment is provided that takes into account the different ages and interests of children.
3. Equipment is provided for babies and toddlers.
4. All donations of equipment and books are approved before going into the play areas.
5. Outside play spaces are tidy and inviting and comply with basic standards laid down in health and safety policy.
6. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback on play areas.

Good practice

1. A suitably trained play worker is available to supervise the play area.
2. Written guidance on support offered by play workers and relevant policies is provided for parents.
3. The play area is regulated with the local play providers.
4. Where staff supervise play sessions, records are kept of children using the play area
5. In supervised areas, an accident record book is used to log any existing marks, cuts or bruises observed on a child when the child enters the play area.
6. Where staff supervise play sessions, a diary is kept of things that work well and problems encountered.

Suggested Evidence

1. Safe and secure play areas.
2. Play materials appropriate to the needs and ages of visiting children.
3. Play materials for babies and toddlers, changing and feeding areas.
4. Heath and safety checks.
5. Tidy and inviting outside play spaces.
6. Recorded feedback from parents.

Good practice

1. Staff job descriptions and person specification.
2. Documented information for parents.
3. Attendance records.
4. Reports from regulators.
5. Accident and incident log book.
6. Up-to-date play area diary.

5 Working with the prison

The Centre maintains sound working relations with the prison. The work of the Centre is set out in a contract and in prison plans. Communication is good. Opportunities are found to work together constructively.

Essential

1. A formal contract between the prison and the service provider sets out the range of expected services and respective responsibilities.
2. The work of the Centre is an integral part of the prison's plans and officers having contact with the Centre understand its remit.
3. The Centre maintains sound working relations with the prison, while maintaining a necessary degree of independence. Both parties respect their different roles and professional standards.
4. Policies are formulated to complement approaches adopted within the prison.
5. Communication channels between the prison and the Centre are clear.
6. Direct personal contact is used to increase the quality of communication.
7. Any use of the Centre by the prison, eg, for notices, is done after consultation with the Centre.
8. Staff and volunteers attend prison training, conferences and functions.

Good practice

1. There is a procedure and channels for resolving differences.
2. Opportunities are taken to raise awareness about the different functions and roles of the prison and the Centre and the development of common understandings.
3. Information about the Centre is provided for prisoners and prison staff through a number of channels.
4. A specific uniformed member of staff as well as a governor act as a link between the prison and the Centre.

Suggested Evidence

1. Current Contract.
2. Prison plans.
3. Records of meetings with key contacts and attendance at committee meetings.
4. Documented policies.
5. Results of communication review meetings, minutes of staff and relevant committee meetings.
6. Minutes of meetings and action agreed between key prison and Centre staff, on a one-to-one basis.
7. Working agreements.
8. Training records and records of attendance at prison conferences or functions.

Good practice

1. Documented procedure.
2. Minutes of meetings and discussions.
3. Information leaflets, records of joint events and minutes of meetings.
4. Record of named person(s) responsible.

6 Building relationships

The Visitors' Centre works with other agencies and the local community to increase its support to visitors. It benefits from the skills and experience of others and takes the opportunity to share good practice and lessons learned.

Essential

1. The Visitors' Centre works together with other agencies and services, especially family support services and parenting services, children's centres, and health visitors to maximise the support provided to visitors

2. The Centre promotes the needs of visitors and their families with relevant agencies and individuals.

3. Nominated individuals within the Centre are authorised to write and speak publicly on its behalf.

4. The Centre maintains up-to-date information about services and activities of other relevant agencies.

5. The Centre maintains good contact with other organisations able to offer relevant training, information, translation and interpreting and other relevant services.

6. The Centre learns from the experience of other prisons and Centres and shares good practice.

7. Staff and volunteers participate in relevant networks and forums.

8. Experience is shared and lessons learnt from other voluntary agencies working within the prison.

9. Links are developed with the local community, serving to break down barriers between local people and the prison and to raise awareness of the work of the Centre and the effects of prison on families.

10. A wide range of local community groups, services and agencies, and facilities such as shops and libraries, are used to publicise the need for local volunteers and support.

11. Local community resources, such as translation and volunteer skills are canvassed and accessed through relations developed with local community groups.

Suggested Evidence

1. Records of meetings, referral procedures and records of referrals.

2. Records of correspondence to other agencies. Records of meetings and contributions to networking events. Presentations of the work of the Centre.

3. Job descriptions. Records of presentations and talks. Press cuttings or radio recordings.

4. Information leaflets from other agencies. Contacts list.

5. Records of training, learning events attended and service records.

6. Information sent to and from other Centres and records of meetings and visits.

7. Records of meetings and communications with other organisations. Records of attendance at network meetings.

8 Records of meetings and correspondence.

9. Records of awareness raising events, information about volunteering opportunities and take up.

10. Publicity relating to volunteering and other support opportunities.

11. Records of the use of local resources. Records of correspondence, meetings and discussions.

Good practice

1. Services provided by other agencies to families from within the Centre are well advertised and are provided in an appropriate location.
2. Formal written agreements outline each agency's responsibility, shared use of resources and costs.
3. Other relevant agencies are regularly updated with information about the Centre and issues of concern to families of prisoners.

Good practice

1. Publicity about services and records of services delivered.
2. Working agreements, signed contracts and proposal plans.
3. Records of correspondence and information provided.

Self assessment sheet
Section 3

Quality standard: _____ Date _____

Essential:

Criteria	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
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9.		
10.		

Good practice:

Indicator	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Action plan

Level (please tick appropriate box)

☐ **Essential**

☐ **Good practice**

Quality standard:

_____

Date when action was agreed

_____

Action agreed	Key person responsible	Completion date

Review date

Section Four: Results

- User results

- People results

- Organisational results

- Community results

The results you achieve for visitors to the Centre are the main reason that you put effort into meeting the standards outlined in Sections One, Two and Three.

This section will help you:

- Demonstrate the difference you are making to visitors, prisoners, children, the prison and the wider community
- Review how the Centre is viewed by its staff and volunteers, and by other agencies
- Become more accountable to your funders and other stakeholders
- Demonstrate the value of the Centre
- Learn from the information you collect.

Results

Visitors are satisfied with the service and there are identifiable benefits for visitors, prisoners, their children and the prison. The Centre has competent staff and volunteers, and the working environment is good. The Centre uses learning to improve its services. There is evidence of contributions to the wider community.

Essential

User results

1. The Centre is easily identifiable and contactable.
2. The Centre is used by adults and children in line with the prison population.
3. Feedback from visitors shows satisfaction with the Centre.
4. Desired changes and benefits – outcomes – are achieved for a range of groups affected by the Centre.

People results

1. Stated competency requirements for staff and volunteer roles are met.
2. Staff and volunteers feel that they are treated fairly.
3. There are indications that staff morale is good.
4. Health and safety audits demonstrate that legal requirements have been met.

Organisational results

1. The Centre draws on a range of resources to provide a service to visitors.
2. The Centre's expenditure is within budget.
3. Activities and information resources meet the different needs of visitors in terms of language, accessibility and formats.
4. Joint work is successfully achieved and increases benefits to visitors.

Suggested sources of evidence

User results

1. Feedback from visitors and other stakeholders.
2. Visitor records. Monitoring information. Analysis of the visitor profile against information on the prison population. Reports to the managing body and funders.
3. Analyses of visitor feedback.
4. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of monitoring information. Reports to the managing body and funders.

People results

1. Personnel specifications for staff and role descriptions for volunteers. Training records and notes of support sessions and supervision.
2. Feedback from staff and volunteers. Notes of exit interviews.
3. Notes from support and supervision sessions. Turnover and sickness absence records.
4. Health and safety audit reports, and reports on health and safety to the managing body. Records of risk assessments and action taken.

Organisational results

1. Planning documents. Reports to the managing body.
2. Annual budget and financial reports to the managing body. Reports to funders on expenditure.
3. Monitoring reports to the managing body and funders. Feedback from visitors.
4. Monitoring reports to the managing body. Feedback from other agencies. Feedback from visitors.

Essential cont.

5. The Centre is known and respected by other relevant organisations.
6. There are identifiable improvements related to quality action plans.
7. Services and activities are enhanced by learning obtained from monitoring and evaluation.

Community results

1. Staff and volunteer employment demonstrates a contribution to the wider community.
2. The Centre achieves efficiencies and savings in the use of environmental resources.

Good practice

1. Staff and volunteer skills and knowledge are increasing as a result of learning and development.
2. Staff and volunteers feel valued and supported by the organisation.
3. The Centre improves its services and activities as a result of involving visitors and other stakeholders.

Suggested sources of evidence cont.

5. Feedback from key stakeholders. Membership of committees.
6. Quality action plans and progress reports. Managing body minutes or reports on quality improvements. Visitor feedback.
7. Evaluation findings and recommendations. Progress reports to the managing body and funders. Records of improvements to services and activities.

Community results

1. Monitoring information on recruitment of staff and volunteers.
2. Records relating to energy conservation, reducing pollution and recycling. Reports to the managing body.

Good practice

1. Training records and qualifications gained. Staff and volunteer development records. Records of supervision and appraisals.
2. Staff and volunteer feedback results. Notes from supervision and support sessions, and records of appraisals. Staff and volunteer turnover rate. Rate of sickness absence.
3. Results of stakeholder feedback. Minutes of planning meetings incorporating stakeholder feedback. Recommendations from consultations with visitors.

Self assessment sheet
Section 4

Quality standard: _____ Date _____

Essential:

Criteria	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
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8.		
9.		
10.		

Good practice:

Indicator	How are we doing?	Available evidence
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Action plan

Level (please tick appropriate box)	Quality standard:
☐ Essential	
☐ Good practice	Date when action was agreed

Action agreed	Key person responsible	Completion date

Review date

Section Five: Collecting evidence on the Centre's results

- Collecting evidence

- One-off information collection

- Use of information and data

This section will help you:

- Decide what information to collect on the results of your work
- Design ways of collecting information about who is using the Centre, the services provided and their benefits
- Show all those with an interest in the Centre the value of its work
- Ensure that you store and use information collected appropriately and legally.

Collecting evidence
You are likely to have three main categories of information that will provide sources of evidence. These are:
- Routine management information, such as minutes and records of meetings
- Regular monitoring information
- One-off information collection.

What this section is about

This section focuses on collecting information about what your Centre achieves. It will help you to provide evidence to show that you are obtaining the results specified in Section Four.

Even if the Centre appears to be running well according to your self-assessment, there are a number of key questions that still need clear responses. These are:

- Who is using the Centre?
- What is the Centre doing?
- How well is the Centre doing?
- What difference is the Centre making?

The indicators in Section Four for user results, people results, organisation results and community results set out the different types of results that you should aim to achieve, and therefore that you need information about. This is also information that you may need to tell other people about, or that will help you demonstrate the value of the Centre. The results indicators in Section Four help you decide what information to collect.

Collecting evidence
You are likely to have three main categories of information that will provide sources of evidence. These are:
- Routine management information, such as minutes and records of meetings
- Regular monitoring information
- One-off information collection.

Key question 1: Who is using the Centre?

This is the relevant indicator in Section Four:

User results

- The Centre is used by adults and children in line with the prison population.

Sources of evidence

- Daily monitoring information
- Snapshot information
- Prison data

How do you gather evidence?

There are a variety of things that it would be useful to know about visitors using the Centre, for example:

- How many attend every day and over different periods of time?
- How many children come into the centre?
- How many children go on visits?

Routine management information

How you collect this information on the numbers of visitors attending the Centre is likely to depend on the respective roles of the Centre and the prison in booking in visitors. If visitors do not report to a reception area in the Centre, you will need to get this information from the prison. If the Centre books in visitors, you can use this process to keep daily statistics on numbers of visitors.

One-off information collection

There are a number of other details about visitors that you may wish to know and want to use to report to funders and to help you plan your services. For example, this may be:

- gender
- age of children
- ethnicity
- language needs
- other specific needs.

Some Centres may be able to record the gender of visitors or even the age of children as part of their daily monitoring activity. For most Centres it may be more realistic to collect some or all of this information as a 'snapshot', over a period of, say, one or two weeks. Repeat this collection of information using the same categories every six months or one year, so that you can judge if your visitor profile has changed significantly.

Key question 2: What is the Centre doing?

These are the relevant indicators in Section Four:

Organisational results

- The Centre draws on a range of resources to provide a service to visitors.
- Joint work is successfully achieved and increases benefits to visitors.

Sources of evidence

- Daily monitoring information
- Snapshot information on activities
- Records of contact with other agencies
- Records of joint meetings with the prison, correspondence and other communication.

How do you gather evidence?

First identify the Centre's outputs. These are all the services and activities that are provided by the Centre. These will include:

- information provision
- support sessions
- drinks and snacks
- play sessions
- talks in the local community
- liaison meetings with the prison.

Routine management information

Think about making the information you already collect in the course of your work more systematic. For example:

- Use your leaflets stocks and supply records to help you record systematically the number of leaflets distributed.
- Use a diary to note who you have met or talked to, and the purpose of or achievements from the meeting. You could then bring this information together and analyse it, grouped under different headings, such as:
- meetings with other agencies
- meetings with the prison
- meetings with the local community.

Regular monitoring information

There are some aspects of the Centre's services where daily monitoring will be in line with good practice:

- With supervised play activities, for example, it is good practice to record the times and length of the play sessions, how many children attended and their ages. You could add to this systematic information about observed levels of stress and tension.
- Keep a diary or other record of sessions conducted by other agencies on the premises.
- Keep a record of any closure or reduction in the refreshments service and its cause.

One-off information

Example 1: Information about some of the Centre's services will be best collected on a one-off basis. For example, over a period of one or two weeks, monitor the number of visitors to whom information is given on a one-to-one basis, or the number of support sessions. You may also decide to record information about length of time spent with a visitor, grouped, for example: under five minutes, more than five and under fifteen minutes, fifteen minutes or longer. This will give you a 'snapshot' of your services.

Example 2: You could carry out a short feedback interview with other agencies running sessions on your premises, or send them a short questionnaire.

Key question 3: How well is the Centre doing?

These are the relevant indicators in Section Four:

User results

- The Centre is easily identifiable and contactable.
- Feedback from visitors show satisfaction with the Centre.

People results

- Stated competency requirements for staff and volunteer roles are met.
- Staff and volunteers feel that they are treated fairly.
- There are indications that staff morale is good.
- Health and safety audits demonstrate that legal requirements have been met.

Organisational results

The Centre's expenditure is within budget.

- The Centre draws on a range of resources to provide a service to visitors.
- The Centre is known and respected by other relevant organisations.
- There are identifiable improvements related to quality action plans.
- Services and activities are enhanced by learning obtained from monitoring and evaluation.

Community results

- Staff and volunteer employment demonstrates a contribution to the wider community.
- The Centre achieves efficiencies and savings in the use of environmental resources.

Sources of evidence

- Visitor satisfaction questionnaires
- Record of suggestions and complaints
- One-off interviews or questionnaires to:
- Visitors
- Prison officers
- Other agency staff

How do you gather evidence?

Routine management information

Example 1: In order to be able to use the feedback you get from visitors through the comments and complaints system, you will need to bring together the information regularly and analyse it within certain categories.

First, divide up and count positive and negative responses. Remember that unless you really ask visitors otherwise, they may be more likely to use a comment book for complaints.

Next, create categories that will help you analyse what the complaints were about. To do this, take about 10 per cent of the comments and find out the most frequent subject for the complaints. Count the number of complaints under each of these categories, and have a separate 'Other Category' for the remaining complaints.

Once you have done this, you can use individual comments to illustrate the range of points that visitors have made.

You can do this for positive comments as well if you are collecting them.

Example 2: Make sure that the information you collect on leaflet distribution includes numbers of leaflets distributed in different languages and formats.

Example 3: Draw out feedback from volunteers and keep a note of them under appropriate categories.

One-off information gathering

Example 1: When you are gathering one-off information about the number and length of information and support sessions, you can also note any language or other communication issues that needed to be addressed, and how these needs were met.

Example 2: In order to collect information more systematically about how far visitors and others are satisfied with the service of the Visitors' Centre, it will be helpful to ask a set of questions to your visitors, either through individual or groups interviews, or through a questionnaire. You can issue a questionnaire to all visitors over a given period of time, say one or two weeks. Whatever method you choose, it is important to reassure visitors that their answers will be confidential, and to identify and limit questions to the most important ones.

Example 3: A once-yearly short staff and volunteer survey can be used to collect information about staff and volunteer satisfaction with their work and the extent to which they feel supported, involved and valued. You could also use the survey to get suggestions about what could be improved in the Centre.

Example 4: You may also wish to have short feedback interviews with the prison officers or with agencies you work with. These can focus on how you work together, and the value that they attach to your work.

Key question 4: What difference does the Centre make?

User results

This is the relevant indicator in Section Four:

- Desired changes and benefits – outcomes – are achieved for a range of groups affected by the Centre.

These may include:

- – visitors
- – prisoners
- – the prison
- – other agencies
- – local community.

Sources of evidence

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Group discussions
- Observation

How do you gather evidence?

As well as describing what you do and who you work with, you also need to describe what the Centre achieves, that is the **outcomes** – the changes or other benefits that happen as a result of your activities. Don't confuse these with outputs – the things you do and the services you provide. Outcomes may be expected or unexpected, welcome or unwelcome. Outcomes will occur for different groups:

- visitors
- children
- prisoners
- the prison
- other agencies and the local community.

The following are examples of outcomes:

- Visitors have an improved quality of visit
- There is a greater take up of appropriate services by visitors

- Family issues are included in prison plans and services.

The following pages provide examples of Visitors' Centre outcomes. Decide which of these are most appropriate or important for your Centre.

Outcome Indicators

Once you have identified outcomes, you need to decide what information to collect to show whether or not your outcomes are achieved. These are your **outcome indicators**. They indicate that an outcome has actually happened, or that progress is being made towards it.

Outcome indicators can be:
Quantitative. Counting the number – they count numbers of things that happen.
or
Qualitative – they assess people's perceptions and experiences.

Outcomes for visitors

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Fewer visitors are turned away from visits	• Number of refused visits
Visitors make more visits	• Number of visits
Quality of visit is improved	• Extent to which visitors feel: – more welcome – safer • Extent to which visitors show: – positive outlook – knowledge and understanding of prison regime
Visitors are better able to make choices on: - security issues - family relationships - their financial situation	• Extent to which visitors are more aware of options
Greater take-up of benefits	• Extent to which visitors take up APVU funding • Extent to which welfare benefits accessed • Range of welfare benefits accessed
Greater take-up of appropriate services	• Number of referrals to other agencies • Number of self-referrals • Amount of specialist support accessed

Outcomes for children

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Increased contact with parent	• Number of visits with children
Improved quality of visit	• Level of challenging behaviour before and after visit • Children express themselves as happy with visit
Enhanced emotional well-being	• Level of challenging behaviour at home • Children's expression of self-worth • Level of expressed loneliness
Greater take up of appropriate services	• Amount of specialist support accessed
Children have a voice in the prison and community	• Children's art work and stories exhibited • Children's needs taken into account in planning services

Outcomes for prisoners

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Increased and maintained contact with family and community	• Number of visits per prisoner
Enhanced welfare of prisoners	• Level of reassurance about family welfare • Number of visitors reporting improved quality of visits • Type of behaviour after visits • Opening of self-harm forms (20.52)
Prisoners are resettled to family role and/ or friendships	• Number of prisoners successfully resettled

Outcomes for the prison

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Calmer visits hall area	• Number of incidents • Number of terminated visits • Reported noise levels • Reported tension levels
Improved communication between prison and visitors	• Number and type of complaints by visitors

Prison policies, facilities and procedures include visitor perspective	• Extent to which procedures meet visitors' expressed needs, eg:
	  – opening times
	  – property
	  – phones
	  – access bookings, visits etc
	• Extent of provision by prison for families, eg:
	  – Parenting classes
	  – Children's day visits

Family issues included in prison plans and services	• Consultation with centre during planning • Positive prison inspection report

Outcomes for other agencies and the local community

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
Shared best practice	• Amount of information about practice shared with other agencies
Services adapted and enhanced to incorporate the needs of families of prisoners	• Extent of change in services by other agencies
Greater take-up of appropriate services	• Number of referrals • Number of self-referrals
Changed attitudes in the local community towards prison and families of children	• Quality of media portrayal • Extent of presence of Visitors' Centre on local community forums • Level of local volunteer involvement • Extent of local financial support • Number and type of awards and commendations.

Building outcome evidence

There is a lot of possible information that you can gather on outcomes. So identify the most important things you want to know and build up your information in easy steps:

Step 1	Identify what information you are already collecting through routine management information and regular monitoring
Step 2	Think how you can add to the routine information you are already collecting or make it relate more closely to your information needs
Step 3	Identify one-off methods of collecting information

Be realistic about what you can do. First get your routine methods of collecting information running smoothly. It will not be possible for you to collect information on all the possible outcomes from your work, so prioritise. When you do interview people or use a questionnaire, keep it short and limit questions to the most important ones.

Routine management information

When you are building information about whether the Centre is improving the quality of the visit, analyse comments from visitors obtained through day-to-day feedback in the same way as you analyse comments about the Centre itself. If you group comments into categories that relate to your outcomes and analyse these periodically, you will be able to compare comments over time. Are there more or less complaints about prison procedures or communication with the prison?

Some of the information you want will be collected by the prison. These will include:
- Number of children visiting and visits with children
- Number of refused visits
- Number of visits per prisoner
- Number of self-harm forms opened.

The first set of information you collect will provide a baseline measurement. That is, you will be able to compare later sets of information against it.

Regular monitoring information

If you collect some types of information routinely, it will help provide you with outcome information. Examples might be:

- Number of referrals to other agencies
- Observation of children's behaviour in a supervised play area.

Some information may be monitored by the prison rather than the Centre. In this case the Centre might request periodic reports from the prison. Examples might be:

- Prisoners' well-being and attitude
- Observation of the visits hall.

You can also build questions relating to the effect of the Centre on quality of visits, the welfare of prisoners and prison approaches to family issues into, for example:

- Regular meetings with the prison
- Information days for prisoners on the role of the Centre.

One-off information

You will be able to obtain some information only by asking people directly. Usually this will be done on a one-off basis, although you may want to do the exercise again after a period of time, possibly every year. Examples of this sort of information might be:

- Visitors' knowledge and understanding of the prison regime
- Extent of change in services by other agencies.

You can ask these questions either in a one-to-one or group interview, or through a questionnaire.

It might be necessary to follow up some visitors at a later time in order to get information on certain outcomes. For example, visitors might be able to tell you more about how the Visitors' Centre helped them access benefits or specialist support, or the extent to which prisoners integrated into the family after the family has stopped coming to the prison. Ask visitors if you can take their details for a follow-up telephone interview after they have stopped visiting.

The example 'Telephone interview with visitors' shows the need to properly structure a telephone interview, so that you can ask the same questions each time and get information that you can collate.

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One-off information collection

This section discusses and provides examples of ways of collecting information. Although this information is collected on a 'one-off' rather than on a regular, routine basis, don't make what you do too complex or time-consuming. You will want to repeat the exercise from time to time, possibly yearly, so that you can compare the results.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire, with a list of questions that everyone is asked, is a good way of asking a large number of people about their needs, views and experiences relatively quickly and easily. Responses can be made anonymously. Disadvantages are that response rates could be low and they call for a reasonable level of literacy.

Questionnaires are used in two ways:
- A set of questions for face-to-face interviews, with the form filled in by the interviewer. The questionnaire might be filled in over the phone.
- A self-completion questionnaire, filled in by the respondent. You can send them out (for example, to other agencies) or ask people to fill them in on the spot, which should increase the response rate.

The design of the questionnaire is important. Ask questions in a way that people will understand. This will be helped if you:
- Involve visitors in designing any questionnaire that is intended for them
- Test the questionnaire out with at least two or three people to see if it works as planned.

It can be helpful to use a scale against which measurement can be made. You can use scales to assess attitude and satisfaction levels. Scales can require a response to a number of statements. There may be a simple choice of agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, or there may be a range of possible responses. A four point scale is usually the minimum, with ten points the maximum.

Example: Visitor satisfaction and outcome questionnaire

The questionnaire can be adapted to meet the needs of your centre. It can be either given to visitors to complete themselves or filled in by a staff member or volunteer through a one-to-one interview.

CONFIDENTIAL

We want to find out more about how satisfied you are with the Visitors' Centre and how it has helped you. Please complete the different sections and return it to a member of staff.

Please tell us more about you

1   Are you   Male ❏   Female ❏

2   How long have you been visiting this prison?

a) Less than two months   ❏

b) Between two months and six months   ❏

c) Between seven months and one year   ❏

d) Between one and two years   ❏

e) Between two and five years   ❏

d) More than five years   ❏

3   Is the person you visit:

a) Your husband/wife/partner   ❏

b) Your child   ❏

c) Other family member   ❏

d) A friend   ❏

e) Other   ❏

4   Do you bring children with you when you visit?

Yes, often ❏   Yes, sometimes ❏   No, never ❏

If yes, please go to question 5

If no, please go to question 8

The play area

5   How satisfied are you with the play area?

Very satisfied ❑   quite satisfied ❑   dissatisfied ❑   very dissatisfied ❑

Please explain why you have given this answer

6   What difference does the play area make to the children?

7   What difference does the play area make to you?

The information in the Centre

8   Have you read any of the information leaflets available in the Centre?

Yes ❑   No ❑   Don't know/can't remember ❑

If yes, please answer Question 9.

If no, please go to question 10.

If don't know, please go to question 11.

9   Have you been able to use or follow up any of the information given?

Yes ❏   No ❏   Don't know/can't remember ❏

If yes, please provide details.

10   You answered no to question 8. Please tick any of these statements about the information leaflets if you agree with them.

a) I was not interested in them   ❏

b) I did not know about them   ❏

c) I had seen them before   ❏

d) I could not read them   ❏

e) Other (please state)   ❏

11   Would you like the leaflets to be available in:

	Yes	No	Don't know
a) Some other format, for example, audiotape	❏	❏	❏
b) Another language	❏	❏	❏

If yes, please provide details of other formats, and languages.

Support

12   Have you been given any support from people in the Centre, apart from the written information?

Yes ❏   No ❏   Don't know/can't remember ❏

If yes, please provide details of how that support helped you?

13 Please state how far you agree with the following statements. You may tick more than one
    answer.

The Centre helped me:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
a) find help from another service?					
b) obtain welfare benefits or other financial assistance					
c) understand the regulations for prison visiting better					
d) feel more relaxed and at ease during visits					
e) feel more welcomed into the prison					

14 Please add any further comments here.

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it to a member of staff.
All responses will be confidential.**

Example: Staff and volunteer satisfaction questionnaire

This questionnaire can be adapted to meet the needs of your Centre. You might issue it once a year, so that you get responses before you start annual planning.

CONFIDENTIAL

We want to find out your views about working in the Visitors' Centre, and any recommendations you may have to improve how we work together, and how we provide our services to visitors.

Please tell us more about you

1   How long have you been working / volunteering in the Centre?

a) Under six months ❑

b) Between seven months and one year ❑

c) Between one and two years ❑

d) More than two years. ❑

2   Do you feel you have enough information and training to do your job / volunteering duties?

Very well ❑   quite well ❑   not well ❑   not well at all ❑

 Please explain why you have given this answer

3   How well do you feel you are supported in carrying out your job / volunteering duties?

Very well ❑   quite well ❑   not well ❑   not well at all ❑

 Please explain why you have given this answer

3   How well do you feel you are supported in carrying out your job / volunteering duties?

Very well ❑   quite well ❑   not well ❑   not well at all ❑

Please explain why you have given this answer

4   How well do you feel staff and volunteers work together as a team?

Very well ❑   quite well ❑   not well ❑   not well at all ❑

Please explain why you have given this answer

5   What do you feel we could do to improve how we work together as a team?

6   What do you feel we could do to improve our services for visitors?

7   Please add any further comments here.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it to a member of staff. All responses will be confidential.

Interviews

Interviews involve going through a series of questions or topics with someone and keeping a careful record of their responses. They can be a good way of exploring difficult issues, especially with people who are not able or do not want to write things down. Interviews can be formal or informal, and may include the use of visual tools, such as pictures, to aid communication and encourage their participation.

Advantages of interviews are that they do not require literacy, and you can check that your questions have been interpreted correctly and that you have properly understood responses. Disadvantages include the lack of anonymity, and that it is time-consuming.

Telephone interviews can be used where you need to contact a large number of people in their home or office. In some situations you may be able to conduct lengthy telephone interviews, but try not to make them longer than 20 minutes. You can use a combination of questions where the responses can be recorded in tick boxes and more open questions, where you will need to record the responses in greater detail. Remember the following good practice points:

- Get agreement to the interview in advance. Make an appointment for the call, just as you would for a face-to-face interview.
- Think about how to keep your call confidential, and reassure people about the interview's confidentiality.
- Allow enough time for making successful contact with respondents.

Group interviews need careful planning and preparation. Remember that group interviews are not good for revealing sensitive information, and you may find the group dominated by one or more individuals.

Example: Telephone interview with visitors: outcomes

You can ask visitors with whom you have had support sessions if they would be happy for you to telephone them in the future to find out how useful the Centre has been.

Thank you for agreeing to talk to us. This interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Nothing you say will be linked with your name and all your comments will be kept confidential.

1   Are you still visiting the prison?   Yes ☐   No ☐

If no, when did you last visit?…………………………………………………

Information and support

2a) Please say how far you agree with the following statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
The Centre has provided me with useful information					

2b) If you disagreed or strongly disagreed, please explain:

2c) If you agreed or strongly agreed, please explain how the information was useful (Prompt: did you go to another agency? take up APVU funding?)

3a) Please say how far you agree with the following statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
The Centre staff have listened to me and provided me with support.					

3b) If you disagreed or strongly disagreed, please explain.

3c) If you agreed or strongly agreed, please explain:

(i) how the support was useful

(ii) anything you did differently as a result of the support

4a) Please say how far you agree with the following statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not relevant
The Centre has helped me take up difficulties with the prison.					

4b) If you disagreed or strongly disagreed, please explain

4c) If you agreed or strongly agreed, please explain how the Centre helped you.

Children visiting

5   Do you bring any children with when you are you visiting?

Yes, often ❏   Yes, sometimes ❏   No, never ❏

6   If the answer to Question 5 is yes, do they attend the play area?

Yes ❏   No ❏

7   If the answer to question 6 is yes, has the Visitors' Centre and / or the play area helped them?

	Yes	No	Don't know
a) During the visit times	❏	❏	❏
b) At home	❏	❏	❏
c) At school	❏	❏	❏

Please explain how it has helped them.

After release

8   Has /will the information and support you have received from the Visitors' Centre help the prisoner to resettle after release?

Yes ❏   No ❏   Don't know/not sure ❏

Please explain your answer.

9   Is there anything else you would like to say about how the Visitors' Centre has helped you?

Thank you very much for helping us with these questions. All the information will be treated in confidence.

Example: Feedback interview with other agencies

You can carry out a short interview with other agencies that are providing advice and support. You can ask them to provide feedback on their experience of working with you, and you can use the information to help you improve what you do and to provide further evidence of the value of the Centre. Remember that if you want to quote what your interviewee has said, you will need to get his or her approval.

Background information (to be completed by the interviewer)

Type of service provided ………………………………………………………….............................

Date when first started working with the Centre………………………………….............................

Number of hours per week…………………

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. We would like to get feedback from you on your experience of working in the Centre so that we can continue to improve our services.

1   How important are the sessions in the Centre to your own priority areas of work?

Prompt: In the Centre are you reaching the same or a different user group from the one you usually reach?

Follow up: Are there issues raised specific to prison visitors as a user group?

2   How suitable are the facilities available for your sessions?

Follow up: Is there anything we could do to improve the conditions in which the sessions are held?

3   Are you able to get in touch with the Centre when you need to?

Prompt: If no, please give an example of a difficulty or explain further.

4   From your experience, how would you describe the value of the service provided by the Visitors' Centre?

5   Is there anything you would suggest we do to improve our services to visitors?

6   How well do you think we are known to other relevant agencies?

Very well known   ❏

Quite well known   ❏

Not well known   ❏

Not at all known   ❏

7   Is there anything you would suggest that we do to improve how we work with other agencies?

8   Is there anything you would suggest we do to improve our profile?

Thank you very much for helping us with these questions. All the information will be treated in confidence.

Use of information and data

You have a legal obligation to make sure that all information held and processed complies with the principles of the Data protection Act[1]. The Act requires all personal information to be treated in the strictest confidence and used only for purposes for which you are aware.

- Make sure data is used for its intended purpose.
- If personal information is kept about individuals, make sure they know exactly
  - what data exists
  - what it is for
  - that they can have access to it to check its accuracy
  - that the Centre will preserve their confidentiality.
- Be clear about how long you will store data. Access to raw data (such as questionnaire responses) should be strictly limited. You can protect identification by allocating a code to each individual, which can be used to record references to them, for example in interview transcripts.

There are only four exceptional cases where disclosure of information is permitted by law.

These are:

- Where the Centre is legally compelled to do so
- Where there is a duty to the public to disclose
- Where disclosure is required to protect the Centre
- Where disclosure is made with individual consent or request.

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[1] You can get information on the Data Protection Act at www.ico.gov.uk and on an information line: 01625 545745. A publication, *The Guide to Data Protection* can be requested on this information line. *The Guide to Data Protection* gives practical advice and looks at the principles of the Data Protection Act.

Glossary of Technical terms

There are some technical terms that are difficult to avoid because of their wide use in voluntary sector management today and, more particularly, within the context of monitoring and evaluation. These are explained below.

Accuracy: the extent to which data and an evaluation is accurate or valid.

Achievement: performance by a project or programme demonstrated by some type of assessment or testing.

Activities: this usually means the main things your organisation does, often the services it provides.

Aim: an aim tells everyone why the organisation exists and the difference it wants to make.

Anonymity: action to make sure that the subjects of the study or report cannot be identified.

Assessment: judgements about the organisation's performance.

Attitude: settled way of thinking or behaviour.

Baseline data: facts about the characteristics of a target group, population and its context, before the start of a project or programme.

Bias: undue influence causing a particular leaning towards one view.

Budget: an estimate of future income and spending.

Business plan: a detailed plan showing how resources will be managed to achieve the strategic plan.

Criterion, criteria: standard against which judgement is made.

Effective: having the results or effect you want; producing the intended benefits.

Efficient: producing the intended results with the minimum necessary resources.

Feedback: presenting findings to people involved in the subject in a way that encourages further discussion and use.

Indicators: see Performance indicators.

Inputs: resources and activities which are used in the organisation to create the services offered.

Management: the people responsible for the organisation; the techniques they use to run the organisation.

Measurement: finding out the extent or quantity of something.

Monitoring: routine and systematic collection and recording of information.

Needs assessment: identification of the extent and types of existing problems, services available and unmet needs.

Objectives: the practical steps the organisation will take to accomplish its aims.

Observation: direct examination and noting of processes, events, relationships and behaviours.

Operational plan: the same as a year plan (see year plan).

Outcomes: the changes or benefits resulting from services and activities.

Outputs: what the organisation does; the services it delivers.

Partnership: an arrangement between organisations for joint action.

Performance indicators: well-defined, easily measurable information, which shows how well the organisation is performing.

Plan: a written description of the steps the organisation will take to achieve certain things.

Policy: a clear statement of intent about how an organisation will behave over certain issues.

Procedure: a written, up-to-date statement of how things are done, easily available to those who need to know.

Process: the method, or step-by-step description, of how a task or activity is to be done.

Profile: the characteristics of a group of people or an organisation.

Project: a major task involving several activities and resources, which may need special attention and control (note: some organisations are called 'projects').

Purpose: the reason for the existence of an organisation or an activity; the changes it hopes to achieve.

Qualitative: primarily descriptive and subject to interpretation.

Quantitative: involving the use of numerical data and measurement.

Questionnaire: a series of questions listed in a specific order.

Reliability: likelihood of getting the same results if procedures are repeated; therefore genuinely reflecting what you are studying.

Respondent: individual providing information directly.

Review: assessing an activity against a target or standard to see how far you have achieved what you intended.

Sample: selection for study of a smaller number of items from a larger group.

Scale: presents respondents with a range of possible responses to a number of statements.

Service: all the goods and information you supply, and things you do for your users (and indirectly for purchasers).

Stakeholders: the people who have an interest in the activities of an organisation. This includes staff, volunteers, users and their carers, trustees, funders, purchasers, donors, supporters and members.

Standard: an agreed level on which to base an assessment.

Statistics: numerical facts systematically collected.

Strategic plan: covers the vision for the future of the organisation and outlines the steps necessary to achieve this over a three- to five-year period.

Strategy: a planned way of achieving long-term aims.

System: the way things are done to achieve a result; usually written down and made available to those who need it.

Target: something to aim for; it is a countable or measurable result.

Trends: show changes over time; can be used to plan future services.

Values: principles and basic beliefs about what really matters, that guide how things should be done.

Year plan: a one-year budgeted plan, outlining objectives and targets for the organisation.

Action for Prisoners' Families

CELEBRATING 21 YEARS