

From June 2021 e-bulletin

“The Regional Secretary – a personal appraisal”

by Ian Allred Regional Secretary West Midlands & North Wales

The NAOPV has divided the prisons in England and Wales into ten regions, which roughly equate to similar regions used by HMPPS, with a regional secretary representing each one.

What is the main purpose of the regional secretary?

Principally it is to be the link providing advice and guidance to both prison officials and Official Prison Visitors (OPVs) in each prison where there are existing schemes; and to aid in establishing new schemes where there are none.

Most enquiries from those interested in Official Prison Visiting are received via the NAOPV website. These are passed on to the relevant regional secretary who contacts the enquirer to send additional information and/or discuss what prison visiting involves in greater detail.

Routine work

This involves keeping in contact with the prison Liaison Officers as and when required by phone, email or personal visits. Where there are established OPV schemes, it is about trying to make sure that they have a sufficient number of OPVs and that the demand for our service from prisoners is maintained. For example this can involve ensuring that there is good publicity within the prison to reflect the availability of the scheme, as well as encouraging Chaplaincy and other prison staff to look out for potential new OPV recruits within their locale and publicise the service where appropriate.

Where prisons have NAOPV branches, regional secretaries will often attend branch meetings to assist with any problems and to keep the branch informed on any national issues of interest.

By meeting up informally with potential new OPV volunteers, regional secretaries can provide a fuller understanding of what the role entails and thereby aid in assisting the prison in making decisions as to the suitability of the persons concerned, prior to eventual appointment by the Governor.

This is very rewarding job and one where the regional secretary has to keep in touch with a wide range of people, but it need not take up an inordinate amount of time. If this sounds like the sort of activity that might appeal to you, we would welcome applications from OPVs who might feel called to this work, so please do get in touch.

Regional Secretary Vacancies

We presently have vacancies on the Executive Committee for **elected members** and would particularly welcome enquiries from individual OPVs, who have professional experience in the fields of education, training and publishing.

A pressing need however, is for **new regional secretaries** to cover the East Midlands region and also provide support in the North West of England.

If any OPVs would like to get involved to assist in these regions, or just find out more perhaps over a personal informal chat with Ian, please contact us in confidence on:

gensec@naopv.com

or by calling **07849 14886**