



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL PRISON VISITORS

IMPACT STATEMENT

Background

There are 123 prisons in England and Wales, of which 14 are privately maintained by G4S, Sodexo & Serco. There are currently over 87,000 prisoners held in these establishments.

The National Association of Official Prison Visitors (NAOPV) is the umbrella organisation for Official Prison Visitors (OPVs) and supports OPVs who are appointed by the Governors of their respective prisons. OPVs are encouraged to be members of the association but membership is not mandatory. Before being appointed to a prison, every OPV must undergo security clearance and internal training prior to being allocated a prisoner to visit. Support within prisons for OPVs is traditionally the responsibility of Managing Chaplains.

An OPV dedicates time to visiting their allocated prisoner, offering commitment, trust and a positive relationship and is often the only individual the prisoner sees who is independent of the establishment.

The impact of Official Prison Visitors

Prisons are places of stress and instabilities, and Official Prison Visitors make a difference on many levels.

On an individual level, an OPV brings commitment, a genuine interest, personal interaction, a confidential and listening ear.

On a social level, an OPV brings the outside world into the stale life of a confined individual, with fresh updates, news and insights. For prisoners on long sentences this is especially valuable as the world they knew is not the world of today and for many, not the world they will be released back into.

Nationally, OPVs form a network of dedicated, experienced and trained individuals, who can visit regularly without the requirement for a prisoner to relinquish a Visiting Order, who are familiar with the environment and understand the nuances and atmosphere of the establishment.

Assurances & endorsements

There have been Official Prison Visitors in our prisons for almost 100 years and theirs is a history of selfless commitment to those who are incarcerated. They are security checked and vetted to the same level as employed prison officers and staff and are further assessed for motivation and character. Despite the range of offences committed by those they visit, there have been very few adverse incidents.

The NAOPV is a wholly voluntary, non-faith-based association with no paid officers or staff. The organisation relies on member subscription for its income and does not receive any external financial support.

The NAOPV contributes to the delivery of a criminal justice system that enables and supports prisoners to transform their lives. Working together with HMPPS as a strategic partner, is crucial in developing the effectiveness of the service and delivering outcomes that aid in the rehabilitation of prisoners prior to their release back into society.

A Memorandum of Understanding is extant between the NAOPV and HMPPS. The document outlines both the Parties commitment to co-operation, collaboration and partnership working so that together they meet their respective aims and objectives to deliver the best outcomes to all who are involved with the oversight of and visiting of prisoners.

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