



Prisoners • Families • Communities
A Fresh Start Together

Issue 127
Legacy 2025

Fresh Start

The supporter newsletter of the Prison Advice & Care Trust (Pact) -
the national Catholic prison charity.

The Legacy Issue

Let's talk: Pact's prison visits scheme

At Pact, positive relationships are at the heart of everything we do. We believe that every person deserves meaningful connections, rooted in dignity, respect, and hope. One of our core values is that we believe in the innate dignity and worth of every human being and the possibility of their rehabilitation and redemption, no matter what they have done.

Healthy relationships are essential to rehabilitation, and social visits play a vital role in prison life. Evidence suggests that maintaining family and social connections can improve mental health and wellbeing, behaviour, and compliance with the prison regime, as well as support successful rehabilitation and resettlement. In fact, people with strong family ties are 39% less likely to reoffend—this benefits individuals and society alike. Unfortunately, there are a significant number of people who, for various reasons, receive no social visits at all and who suffer the adverse effects of isolation.

Pact's Volunteer Visitors Scheme provides vital support to people in custody who would otherwise receive no visits.

Operating at HMPs Brixton, Highdown, Send, and HMP/YOI Isis, we welcome volunteers from all walks of life, carefully matching them with individuals in custody based on shared interests and backgrounds.

Mark, a retired teacher, is one of our volunteers: "I had wanted to become a prison visitor for a few years, and had approached a number of prisons directly, but for whatever reason it hadn't happened. I was already involved with Pact through my parish, and I was delighted to hear about this visitor scheme.

"The men I visit tend to have chaotic or broken relationships in the outside world. Sometimes their offence means that family don't want to visit, or they drift apart because of the travel involved. One chap, T, has had two visits in seven months, and is painfully isolated, although he puts a brave face on it. He has to put a brave face on it; prison is an unforgiving place! I offer him a chance to connect with someone outside of the prison system. I am a safe person to talk to and to let his guard down with.

Continued inside



"I don't ask about his offence, unless he wants to discuss it. I put it to the side. People are very complex, and they make mistakes. Some mistakes are worse than others. We all have sides of ourselves that are hidden that we don't like or are not proud of. So, I set aside what he has done in the past. I'm there to make a connection and offer friendship. I am genuinely interested in him as a person, and I enjoy our hour or so together.

"Just visiting a prison took some getting used to; the security and the logistics are a challenge. The prison officers have a very tough job and are under a lot of pressure. We are very careful not to let anyone in the prison know that I'm part of a visitor's scheme. That would leave the person I visit open to mocking or ridicule from other prisoners. Likewise, there have been occasions where, due to unforeseen circumstances, I've had to cancel a visit. The news wasn't successfully relayed within the prison, and so my guy was sitting in the hall for an hour twiddling his thumbs, which was upsetting and embarrassing for him. It really impacted our rapport. So, the role requires a lot of commitment.

"I know T appreciates it, I know it means something to him. I offer some normality and a friendly, warm interaction.

It's a cliché, but I want to make a difference. I hope I can help him, in some small way, to prepare for life in the outside world.

"I always look for the good in people. T is really very socially adept. He knows how to avoid conflict where he needs to, and how to build relationships with his social group on the wing. He has also found a level of gratitude and acceptance of his situation, which I can only admire. He has found successful strategies for navigating a really difficult environment. I pray he can transfer them to the rest of his life.

"We hear a lot about the problems in the criminal justice system; the budget cuts, the overcrowding, the violence. I think Pact offers a way to really make a difference, and to provide at least part of the solution. People are complex, and "but for the Grace of God go I". For me personally, I am motivated by scripture and Matthew 25, which I know is central to Pact's ethos. I hope that if I were in T's situation, someone would remember me, and would visit me too."



Our new address

Pact originally came into existence as The Catholic Prisoners' Aid Society in 1898. It was founded by two Catholic lawyers at HMP Wandsworth, so this move represents a homecoming of sorts for us! We are preparing diligently to ensure a smooth move, and we cannot wait to get started at our new home.

Please note that, as of June 2025, we are relocating our central offices to the visitors centre just outside the grounds of HMP Wandsworth. Our new postal address will be -

**Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact)
Homework Southfields
265-269 Wimbledon Park Road
London
SW19 6NW**

This will replace our current address – 29 Peckham Road, London SE5 8UA and we would ask you to **update your records accordingly**.

Your Catholic Legacy Week: A Chance to Leave a Lasting Gift

Your Catholic Legacy Week (2 – 9 June) brings together Catholic charities and dioceses, united in the mission to help you make a meaningful difference in the world.

This special week is your opportunity to remember Catholic causes in your will. Remembering a cause that matters to you is a way to see your values live on and continue your lifelong walk of faith. You can make a real difference for future generations, especially at Pact.

By leaving Pact a gift in your will, you will be helping people to navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system, often during some of the most difficult days of their lives.

This Jubilee year is a powerful reminder to respond to the needs of the world with compassion and mercy and to embrace the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. With your support, we can offer people the promise of a fresh start, keeping families connected, creating safer prisons, and reducing reoffending.

If you'd like to leave a legacy in your will, we offer a free will-writing service for our supporters.

Get in touch at mylegacy@prisonadvice.org.uk to learn more.

“ We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us.

Pope Francis

”



Catholic Community Engagement Manager Theresa with Bishop David Oakley at Northampton Cathedral's Prisoners' Sunday service



Thank you to our marathon runners!

We send our warmest thanks and most heartfelt respect to our runners in this year's London Marathon! It was a hot day and difficult conditions, but they did us proud!

On behalf of all at Pact, a huge thank you to **Karine Vere** (Clifford Chance), **Sam Chenoweth** (FTSE Russell), **David Mannion** (Masumi + Consoli LLP), and **Guy MacNamara** (Ministry of Sound) & **Shuai Yang**!



Put your faith into action this Prisoners' Sunday



On 12 October 2025, we mark Prisoners' Sunday, an opportunity to put faith into action and reflect on how we, as individuals, communities, and the Church, support our brothers and sisters affected by imprisonment.

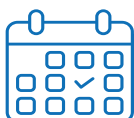
At the start of this Jubilee year, Pope Francis opened the second Holy Door in Rebibbia Prison in Rome, signifying his desire for the Church to hold prisoners close to her heart and reminding us all to open our hearts to Christ.

This Prisoners' Sunday, we will remember Pope Francis' legacy and reaffirm our mission to offer hope and support to people in prison and their families.

Now more than ever, we need your help to continue our work. You can:

- ▶ Invite us to speak in your church on or around Prisoners' Sunday and hold a second collection for Pact. Contact us at parish.action@prisonadvice.org.uk
- ▶ Donate to our Prisoners' Sunday appeal
- ▶ Pray for prisoners and their families

For more information, visit
www.prisonadvice.org.uk/prisoners-sunday



Dates for your diary

- **12th October 2025**
Prisoners' Sunday
- **2nd December 2025**
Advent Carol Service
- **14th December 2025**
Jubilee for Prisoners

Pact is the national Catholic charity supporting prisoners, people with convictions and their children and families.

We provide caring and life-changing services at every stage of the criminal justice process: in court, in prison, on release, and in the community.

Pact is registered in England and Wales as a charity (no. 219278) and a company limited by guarantee (no.356443)

member
caritas
social action network



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**



Staying in touch

We always respect our supporters' wishes and would like to know if you're happy to keep receiving Fresh Start. If you are, then you don't need to do anything.

If you'd like us to stop sending Fresh Start or if your contact details have changed, you can get in touch by:

Telephone: 07710 170 942

Email: fresh.start@prisonadvice.org.uk

Post: Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact)
Homework Southfields
265-269 Wimbledon Park Road
London
SW19 6NW

Website: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

