



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Engaging Families and Significant Others in Prisoner Safety and Wellbeing Toolkit

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Introduction

The guidance and resources in this Toolkit have been developed as part of a four year programme of work to support the engagement of families and significant others in the care and safeguarding of prisoners.

As a result of the programme:

- all prisons have an online safer custody portal page that sits on the Prisoners Families Helpline website;
- all prisons have an online safer custody contact form function that allows families/significant others to submit concerns directly to safer custody functional mailboxes;
- all prisons have been provided with guidance about how to log, action and respond to concerns raised by families and significant others.

This Toolkit provides information and guidance to support prisons in continuing to engage families and significant others in the care and safeguarding of prisoners.

Safer custody portal for family and significant others

Introduction

All prisons have their own safer custody portal page. They can be found here: [Safer Custody Portal Page](#).

The aim of the portal is to:

- provide families with accurate information online about what to do if they have a concern;
- triage families' concerns to the correct source of information to help ensure that only safety related concerns go through to the safer custody hotline;
- alleviate the anxieties and concerns that families often have when a loved one first goes into custody (and hopefully reduce the need for them to contact the prison to answer questions they might have).

'It's fantastic and offered me all numbers efficiently and quickly... thank you.'
(Safer custody portal user)

Safer custody contact forms can be submitted by concerned families/significant others via the safer custody portal. The forms are sent directly to your safer custody functional mailbox. It is your Safer Custody Teams' responsibility to log, action and respond to every contact form received. All forms must be responded to within 72 hours of receipt. The form clearly states that urgent/threat to life concerns must not be shared via this form. Individuals who have submitted a contact form will receive an automatic email from the website confirming the time and date at which the form was sent to the functional mailbox.

'I work full time, my work do not know about my family circumstances, [the contact form] was a more private way to contact the prison.' (Contact form user)

'It is easier to check that concerns are expressed clearly [on a contact form] and that all are included. Also, it was late at night when I first needed to make contact and I didn't think there would be anyone available to telephone. I was too stressed to talk coherently.' (Contact form user)

Promoting your portal page

It is important that as many families and significant others as possible are made aware of the portal and what it provides. Try to promote the portal using a variety of methods, this might include:

- **Posters to advertise the portal in visit centres and visit halls**
Posters are included in the Toolkit appendices.
- **Emails to families**

You could include a link to the portal in any email correspondence with families or significant others. This might be when your safer custody team, healthcare team or chaplaincy team is communicating with families. You could also add a link to the portal in the email signatures of staff who regularly communicate with families.

- **Safer Custody answer machine message**

You could signpost families to the portal from the answer machine message on your safer custody hotline.

- **Social media**

Lots of families use Twitter to keep up to date with prison practice. You could put a link in your Twitter bio or pin a tweet to the top of your Twitter account with the link to the portal. Please use the following Tweet:

Example tweet:

We want to make sure that families have information at their fingertips when they are concerned about a prisoner here at **[HMP prison name]**. We have an online safer custody portal which will signpost you to the right source of information: **[link to prison safer custody portal page]**

- **Family and significant other strategy**

Include details of and a link to the portal in your strategy.

- **Promote the portal and contact form amongst prisoners**

The Toolkit appendices includes a poster to promote the portal and contact form function amongst prisoners. Information could also be included on kiosks and in prisoner induction packs.

- **Promote the portal and contact form amongst prison staff**

The Toolkit appendices includes a poster to promote the portal and contact form function amongst staff. Information could also be included in staff induction processes and global newsletters.

Keeping your portal page up to date

If any details need changing on your portal page, please email:

scportal@prisonadvice.org.uk

Responding to families and significant others

Why it is important to respond to families' concerns

It is mandatory to provide prompt feedback to families and significant others after they have shared a safer custody concern.

'The process must include prompt feedback to the person who raised the concerns, to confirm that the individual is safe and (with due consideration to the appropriateness of the level of information sharing) to describe what action is being taken.'

(Strengthening Prisoners Family Ties Policy Framework, 31 January 2019, MoJ /HMPPS)

Target 2 – Emergency & Contact Procedures

e) There is a procedure in place to provide feedback/re-assurance to callers
(Family and Significant Other Measurement Tool, HMPPS/MoJ)

'It is important to contact the person who has raised concerns and to provide them with feedback.'

(Prison Safety Learning Bulletin Issue 38: How to respond to contact from family members and friends of prisoners who are concerned about their wellbeing, March 2019, HMPPS)

'Share relevant information about a prisoner's wellbeing with their consent where appropriate. You may still share information without consent in certain situations.'

(Prison Safety Learning Bulletin Issue 37: Sharing information with a prisoner's family and/or friends: when can it be done and what can be disclosed?, March 2019, HMPPS)

'Governors must ensure that feedback is provided to the person who has raised concerns promptly (preferably on the same day, and within 72 hours maximum), and that relevant information about the individual is shared where it is appropriate to do so. **(Forthcoming Safety Policy Framework, HMPPS, due 2024)**

Prompt feedback to the family member/significant other has the following benefits:

- Provides staff with the opportunity to collect additional information with regards to the safeguarding concern to ensure a full picture is developed.
- Allays anxieties in family member/caller that message has not been heard/responded to and provides the opportunity to reassure that appropriate action has been taken.

‘I was in very bad mental breakdown when I contacted you. And the assurance and help I received calmed me down that night and gives me confidence. Thanks’

(Contact form user).

- Potentially reduces the number of subsequent follow-up calls that family member/caller may make to safer custody/prison switchboard (as a result of not knowing whether their concern has been heard/responded to).
- Develops and strengthens prison relationship with family members who may be able to provide vital support and motivation for prisoner and inform prisoner care.
- May encourage family members/significant others to share safer custody concerns in the future. This is important because an individual’s family or significant other may well be in a better position to know when something is wrong, and to spot signs of improvement. They might have been their primary carer in the community, they may have contributed to care planning meetings in the community, they may know their history of trauma and/or what can help manage their mental health.

Consent and confidentiality

One of the most common reasons that staff do not feel confident about responding to families/significant others is uncertainty regarding consent and confidentiality.

The Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information. It is there to make sure that personal information is shared **appropriately**.

In terms of information sharing, we should always consider what is in the best interest of the individual’s wellbeing at that particular time. Proportionality is essential – ensuring we are only sharing the information that is relevant and proportional to that particular incident.

It is important to focus on information we **can** share rather than information we **cannot** share.

For further information:

[Prison Safety Learning Bulletin Issue 37: Sharing information with a prisoners family and or friends when can it be done and what can be disclosed](#)

When you have received a safer custody concern from a family member:

- Check whether the prisoner has already given consent for the family member to receive information (establishments need to establish a system for recording and updating consent in place for prisoners).
- If there is no recorded consent in place:
 - Undertake the necessary checks with the Offender Management Unit or Security, to confirm the identity of the individual and ensure there are no restrictions in place.
 - If there are no restrictions in place and the individual’s identity has been confirmed, the prisoner should be asked for their consent to share information during their welfare check. It is important that the purpose of sharing the information is explained to them and why it may be beneficial.

You need to establish what information they are happy to be shared. The individual must be made aware that they can withdraw their consent at any time.

- Return calls/emails to family members/significant others who have shared a safer custody concern should still be made regardless of whether consent is in place (see script guidance below).

When can prison staff disclose information without consent?

As the guidance for professionals contained in the consensus statement on information sharing and suicide prevention makes clear, where a person is at imminent risk of suicide there may well be doubts about their mental capacity. Where this is the case, and you have confirmed the identity of the person calling, relevant confidential information can be disclosed if it is considered to be in the person's best interest to do so. So, where it is believed that the involvement of a family member or friend may help to prevent serious harm to a prisoner who is at risk of suicide, it may be appropriate to disclose information to them without the prisoner's consent. The urgency of the need for disclosure will be relevant to the judgement that is taken in each case. Wherever possible staff should take advice from a manager and discuss with healthcare colleagues before making decisions of this nature.

Prison Safety Learning Bulletin Issue 37: Sharing information with a prisoner's family and/or friends: when can it be done and what can be disclosed? March, 2019

Initial contact with families

While some safer custody lines may be staffed during office hours, others will be answered by an answer machine. It is important that regardless of how the safer custody line is delivered calls are:

- responded to promptly;
- responded to in a professional and respectful manner;
- responded to in a way that makes it clear what information the caller needs to provide;
- responded to in a way that reassures the caller that their concern is being actioned;
- logged consistently.

For guidance on how calls should be logged see resource 'The Safer Custody Communications Log' in this Toolkit.

Contact forms submitted via the safer custody portal should be picked up within 72 hours and families responded to as soon as possible after that.

Safer custody answer machine

Safer custody answer machines should be checked a minimum of three times a day, seven days a week.

A log of when the safer custody answer machine is checked and who by should be updated each time messages are played.

Safer custody answer machine messages should be logged in the same way that calls and emails to safer custody are logged.

The answer machine message should state:

- the function of the safer custody hotline
- how regularly messages are checked
- that calls regarding safer custody concerns will be returned
- what information the caller is required to provide in their message
- that the portal page is available for further information and to submit contact forms
- an alternative number for urgent concerns.

Example answer machine message:

Welcome to the HMP xxx Safer Custody Hotline. This is a service to raise concerns about a prisoner. If you would prefer to submit a concern online to our safety team, please visit the Prisoners' Families Helpline website on www.prisonersfamilies.org and select 'worried about a prisoner'.

Our answer machine is regularly checked, 7 days a week and we will try to return your call. If you believe that there is an immediate threat to life, please contact 'xxxxxxx' and ask to speak to the Duty Governor. Please be aware that we record and store caller details on our internal database.

Please leave the following details:

Your name, contact number and relationship to prisoner
The prisoners' name and prisoner number (if you have it)
Brief details about your concern

Many thanks for contacting the HMP xxxx Safer Custody Hotline

Answering calls to the safer custody line

- Introduce yourself and confirm the caller's identity by checking on NOMIS/DPS. If the caller is not on NOMIS/DPS, check the alerts to make sure there are no restrictions in place associated with that caller.
- Do not confirm the prisoner is in the prison unless the caller is an approved contact. If it is unclear, inform the caller that **if** the prisoner is in the prison the relevant checks and actions will be undertaken to keep the prisoner safe.

- Remain calm and offer reassurance. Demonstrate active listening by repeating the person's concerns. Explain that you will check on the prisoner's welfare and take further action if needed. Commit to when you will contact the caller with an update.
- Ideally calls should be logged on the electronic spreadsheet while you are on the call to ensure that the required information is asked for (see: 'Logging safer custody calls' for guidance as to what information should be logged).
- Check to see what consent is in place (see above).
- If a welfare check is required explain what this involves and reassure the caller when this will be undertaken.
- If the concern is about a specific department eg. healthcare, get details of any medications or treatments the caller is aware of so it can be passed on to healthcare.
- Ask them if they require a call back – making them aware of the consent restraints.
- If this is the first time they have had to deal with someone being in prison sign post them to the Prisoner Families' Helpline website (www.prisonersfamilies.org).

Type of contact	Suggested reponse
<p>Not safer custody related – for example, wanting to make a complaint, arrange a visit or ask a question about property.</p>	<p>Script for phone calls:</p> <p>Thank you for your call.</p> <p>You have come through to the safer custody team. The safer custody team are here to keep the prison safe for everyone and this hotline is for when you are worried about the safety or wellbeing of a prisoner. It is important that we keep the line free for safety concerns so we can respond to those concerns as quickly as possible.</p> <p>As your call is not safety related, please can I ask that you instead... [insert relevant service/s - such as]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact our Family Service provider, [insert name of provider] on [insert contact details] who will be able to support you and answer any questions you might have. • follow our complaints process, by writing to the Governor directly [provide name and address] - all complaints should be responded to within 28 days. • contact the national Prisoners' Families Helpline on 0808 808 2003, who can provide confidential support and information about all aspects of the criminal justice system or visit their website at www.prisonersfamilies.org <p>Script for emails:</p>

	<p>This email is to confirm that we have received and logged your concern that you sent via the Prisoners' Families Helpline website.</p> <p>The contact form that you completed is for sharing concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a prisoner with the prison safer custody team. As your concern is not safer custody related we would like to suggest that you [insert relevant]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact our family service provider who can provide you with more information about visits/staying in touch/sending in property. Please contact them on [insert email address/telephone number] a) raise a complaint by sending a letter to: FAO The Governor, address of the prison (all complaints should be responded to within 28 days, for more information about making complaints visit: <u>Making a complaint Prisoners' Families Helpline</u> • contact the Prisoners' Families Helpline on 0808 808 2003, who can provide confidential support and information about all aspects of the criminal justice system or visit their website at <u>www.prisonersfamilies.org</u> <p>Please note we cannot reply to emails sent to this address. If you have any further concerns about a prisoner in our care please telephone our Safer Custody Hotline on [insert number] or send a contact form via [insert link].</p> <p>Many thanks for contacting us, HMP prison, Safer Custody Team</p>
<p>Abusive, angry or aggressive</p>	<p>Families may often feel anxious or frustrated-particularly when they think that their loved one is at risk, and this can come across as challenging on the phone.</p> <p>Explaining the action that you will take to help can reassure families that their loved one will be safe.</p> <p>If an individual becomes aggressive or abusive it is important to remain calm and to ask them to stop. If they persist it is appropriate to politely end the call. Record your actions and inform a manager.</p> <p>Prisons should have a local escalation system in place to refer calls/emails to an appropriate manager when required.</p>
<p>Persistent contact</p>	<p>Where your safer custody log highlights repeated or persistent calls or emails from one individual this should be</p>

	<p>flagged with the Head of Safer Custody. A plan should be put in place as early as possible to ensure that one caller does not put unnecessary pressure on safer custody resources. This might involve allocating a single point of contact for that family member – for example, if the concern is about lack of contact you might ask the Family Engagement Worker at your site to contact the caller and explore the reasons why this contact has not been made. Alternatively, a Custodial Manager or an ACCT Case Manager might commit to updating the caller on a weekly basis for a set period to alleviate anxiety and build trust between the prison and the caller.</p>
<p>Identity unable to be confirmed</p>	<p>Thank the individual for their contact.</p> <p>If it is by phone, demonstrate active listening by repeating the person's concerns.</p> <p>Explain due to data protection and the prisons' duty to keep prisoners safe that as you are unable to confirm their identity you cannot share any further information but reassure them that you have heard their concerns.</p> <p>Example phrase: 'I can't give you any further information, but I can take as much information from you as you would like to share.'</p>
<p>Where there are restraining orders or restricted contact between individual and prisoner</p>	<p>If there is a restraining order or restricted contact this will be recorded on NOMIS/DPS under alerts.</p> <p>Thank the individual for their contact.</p> <p>If it is by phone demonstrate active listening by repeating the person's concerns.</p> <p>Explain due to the restrictions you cannot share any further information but reassure that you have heard their concerns.</p> <p>If you feel the individual needs support or information about the criminal justice system signpost them to the Prisoners' Families Helpline: 0808 808 2003.</p> <p>If the individual has a restraining order on them detailed in alerts this information should be submitted as an Intelligence Report (IR).</p>

For further information:

HMPPS Safety Briefing, April 2021: [Responding to contact from the family and significant others of prisoners](#)

Responding to families/ significant others

a) Responding where consent is not in place

It can be difficult to respond to a family member/significant other where the prisoner has not provided consent for information to be shared. Where legitimate safer custody concerns have been shared however, it is important that return calls are made.

The following information **can** be shared, even when consent is not in place:

- Confirmation that their concern has been logged and if required a welfare check will be undertaken which involves checking on the prisoner to check they are safe.
- If after completing the welfare check more support is needed referrals can be made to various departments such as healthcare, mental health, family services team or chaplaincy.
- Reassurance that there are numerous support services within the prison – keyworkers, chaplaincy, family support workers, healthcare inc. mental health, and substance misuse.
- Further information about the prison can be accessed on the prison gov.uk page or general information about prison life on the Prisoners Families Helpline: www.prisonersfamilies.org

Useful phrases can include:

- 'I know it can be frustrating for you to hear that I am unable to share information with you'.
- 'Due to confidentiality, I am unable to share the specific details with you of the support xx is receiving but be assured support is in place'.
- 'The prison is aware of the issues / concerns and support is in place'.
- 'We can pass on your concerns to xx and encourage them to call / contact you'.
- 'Your concern has been passed onto our healthcare department'. Or another specific department where appropriate.
- 'While I have not got consent to share any further information with you I would encourage you to contact us again if you have any concerns about the prisoner at all – as it is really helpful.'

Suggested script when responding by phone or email where there is no consent in place:

'Although I am not able to share any information with you at this time, I can confirm that we have logged your concern and will make any relevant checks. I know it can be very difficult for you to hear that I am unable to share

information but I must reassure you that safeguarding prisoners is of utmost importance to us and we have key workers, peer support, chaplaincy and healthcare provision in place to make sure they are supported. Thank you for getting in touch with us and please contact us again if you have further concerns about a prisoner'.

b) Responding when consent is in place

Always check what information you have consent to share, for example, the prisoner might be happy for you to let them know they are receiving treatment, but not the nature of or reason for that treatment.

Update the individual on when the welfare check was made, the prisoners' welfare and any actions that were undertaken (e.g. prisoner put on ACCT/review of ACCT/prisoners asked to ring caller/callers details added to prisoners' PIN etc.).

If there is an opportunity for family member to contribute to ACCT process, make this clear (see resource: Engaging Families and Significant Others in the ACCT Process).

Thank caller for ringing and encourage them to get back in touch if needed.

Example email response:

This email is to confirm that we have received and logged your concern that you sent via the Prisoners' Families Helpline website.

Insert any relevant information about the actions taken, for example:

- We have undertaken a welfare check and can assure you that the prisoner is safe and well.
- We have spoken to the prisoner and asked them to contact you as soon as possible.
- We have passed on your concern to our colleagues in the healthcare team and they are following up your concern.
- As your concern is not safer custody related we would like to suggest that you contact our family service provider who can provide you with more information about visits/staying in touch/sending in property. Please contact them on **[insert email address/telephone number]**
- To make a complaint about the treatment of your loved one please send a letter to: **FAO The Governor, address of the prison**

Please note we cannot reply to emails sent to this address. If you have any further concerns about a prisoner in our care please telephone our Safer Custody Hotline on **insert number** or send a contact form via **insert link**.

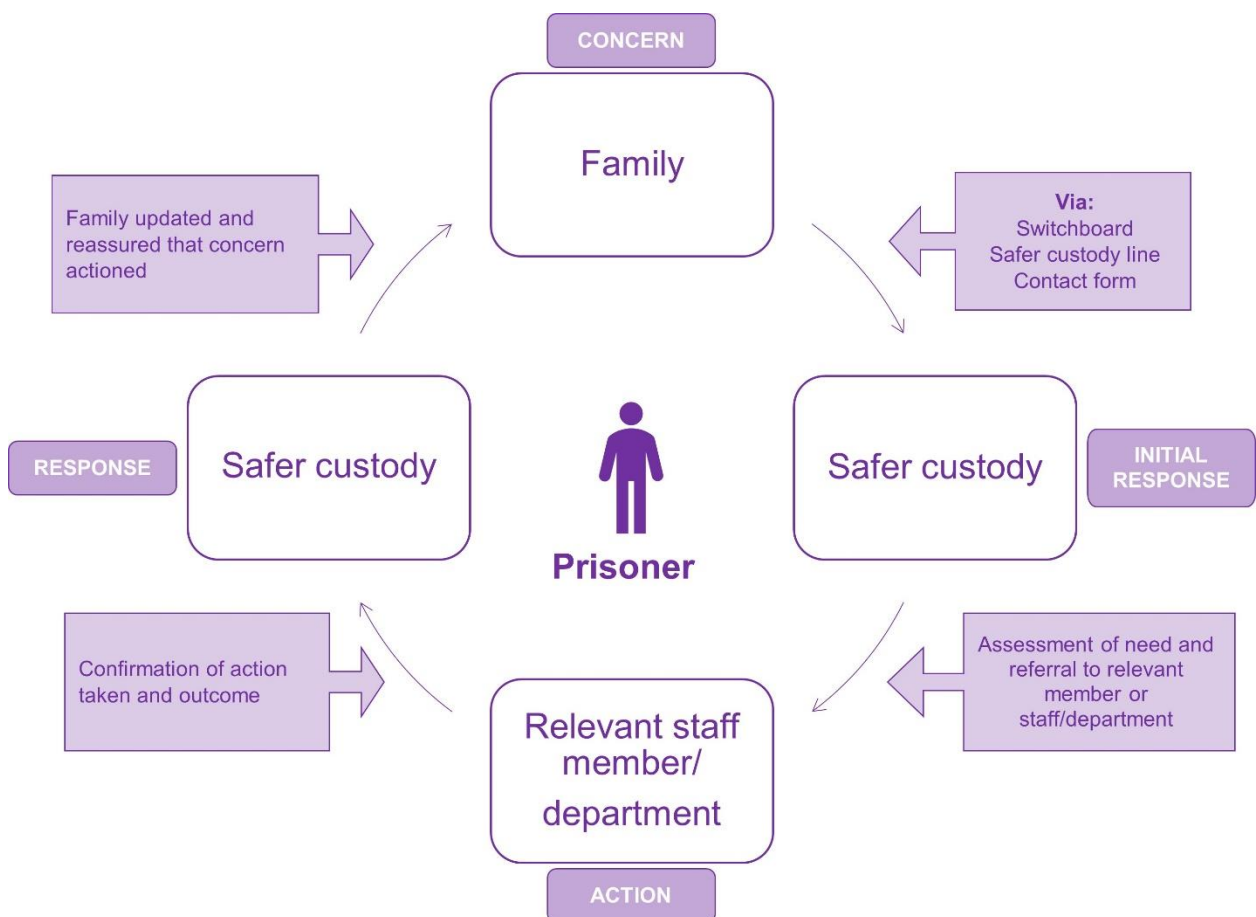
Many thanks for contacting us,
HMP **prison**, Safer Custody Team

Cross-departmental working in response to family safer custody concerns

A significant number of concerns shared by families/significant others will require the involvement of other departments. For example - while a concern about the mental health of a prisoner may require an urgent welfare check by safer custody, it may also require cross-departmental working with the healthcare department to ensure that their health needs are being assessed and met effectively.

Safer custody teams can provide an invaluable **central co-ordinating role** as they receive the initial contact from families and can then ensure:

- oversight of how the concern is actioned
- families are responded to and engaged effectively
- concern is consistently logged in central location from start to finish (initial concern, action taken and outcome).



It may be that other teams or departments already have an established relationship with that family member/significant other and by linking with them you can ensure that:

- consistent information is being shared with the family member/significant other

- duplication of resources is avoided (such as both departments speaking with the family member)
- the most appropriate person updates the individual with actions taken - it may be that, as the other department has an established relationship with the individual, they are best placed to respond to the family member/significant other.

Case study 1 of cross departmental response to safer custody concern from family/significant others

Safer custody and healthcare (large male B-cat prison)

<p>Issue</p>	<p>Monthly analysis of the prison safer custody logs demonstrated that a high proportion of calls to the safer custody hotline were healthcare related.</p> <p>The logs suggested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was a lack of consistency as to when healthcare was informed about health concerns that were raised via the safer custody hotline • while the safer custody logs recorded that concerns were referred to healthcare, there was no log to confirm action had been taken and families had been updated • there was a limited communication between healthcare and safer custody in response to safer custody concerns • where concerns were referred to healthcare there was a lack of clarity with regards to whose responsibility it was to make return calls to families (and as a result families often did not receive a return call).
<p>Response</p>	<p>Healthcare and safer custody established an agreed system to respond to health-related safer custody concerns. They piloted this for a month to ensure that it was possible within resources before agreeing this as an ongoing process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All concerns received by the safer custody team, relating to mental or physical health must be referred to the healthcare team via the identified single point of contact (SPOC - in this case it was the Head of Healthcare). If there was a risk to life or immediate risk of harm a welfare check should also be undertaken by the Safety Team. • The Safety Team should log the date and time the referral was made to healthcare on their safer custody log. • Healthcare SPOC will then ensure that concern is passed on to relevant individual in their team who has responsibility for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actioning concern - updating Safety Team that concern has been actioned and clarifying what information can be shared with family in line with prisoner consent

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarifying with Safety Team whether healthcare is already working with family (in which case they return call to family). • Following update from healthcare, Safety Team then updates safer custody log to confirm actions undertaken by healthcare and rings family back with update.
Outcome	<p>Improved joint working between Healthcare and Safety Teams</p> <p>Improved logging of safety concerns where concern is referred to another department.</p> <p>Improved communication with families.</p>

Case study 2 of cross departmental response to safer custody concern from family/significant others

Safer custody and family provider organisation (female prison)

Issue	<p>The safer custody log demonstrated that a prisoners' mother was making an increasing number of calls to the safer custody line – sometimes multiple calls a day.</p> <p>The calls related to healthcare concerns, complaints about members of staff or enquiries about her daughter's treatment and care.</p> <p>The log demonstrated that the caller was becoming increasingly anxious and challenging.</p> <p>The caller was also in regular contact with her daughter (multiple times a day) and both mother and daughter were struggling with their mental health and anxiety.</p> <p>The calls were having a significant impact on the Safety Teams resources and communication with the mother was clearly not alleviating her anxiety.</p>
Response	<p>The Safety Team felt that many of the behaviours exhibited by the Mother may be in response to her relationship with her daughter and therefore the Family Provider organisation may be best placed to support the mother.</p> <p>The Family Engagement Manager spoke to both the prisoner and the mother to ask them whether they would be comfortable attending a teleconference meeting to discuss ways forward.</p> <p>A meeting was held with the mother, prisoner, Family Engagement Manager and Custodial Manager (CM) from the prisoners' Wing. It was agreed that the CM would contact the mother on a weekly basis to provide updates and the prisoner provided consent as to what information she was happy to be shared with her mother.</p> <p>Due to irregular shift patterns, the CM was unable to make weekly calls at the same time each week and after a few weeks it was</p>

	<p>decided that the Family Engagement Manager would take this role on.</p> <p>The mother now receives weekly Monday morning phone calls at the same time each week from the Family Engagement Manager.</p>
<p>Outcome</p>	<p>Significant reduction in phone calls to Safety Team – daily calls have now reduced to around twice a month and those calls that are made are relevant to safer custody.</p> <p>Both mother and daughter feel less anxious. The mother trusts that she will be updated regularly and the daughter, who was anxious about her mother’s wellbeing, feels confident that her mother is receiving support. The reduction in anxiety has had a positive impact on their behaviour.</p> <p><i>‘My support was actually not about the prisoner at all, it was about empowering Mum and helping her to manage and understand her daughter’s behaviour. Now they have a more honest relationship that goes both ways.’ (Family Engagement Manager)</i></p>

The safer custody communications log

This guide is to be used alongside the template Safer Custody Communications Log Excel spreadsheet.

The aim of the spreadsheet is to:

- ensure that family and significant other concerns (whether shared via phone call or contact form) are logged and responded to effectively in order to **safeguard prisoners**
- provide a **consistent model** for logging safer custody communications from families and significant others
- support **outcome focused** safer custody communications logs
- enable establishments to **demonstrate the effectiveness of their gateway communication with families and significant others** to relevant quality assurance processes, including OSaG and HMIP
- support **cross-departmental working** in response to safer custody communications
- enable **effective data analysis** of safer custody logs that can inform practice/policy across establishments
- create an **efficient logging system** that does not require additional resource.

Target 2 – Emergency & Contact Procedures

d) Contacts are logged consistently and data from the logs is used to inform wider safety practice across the prison.

(Family and Significant Other Measurement Tool, HMPPS/MoJ)

‘Governors must establish a system for logging calls that provides assurance that prompt and appropriate action has been taken and ensures that the information received informs the ongoing care of the individual prisoner. The information in this log must be used to create a regular report that is discussed at the establishment’s safety meeting and used to inform its safety strategy. Relevant data should also be shared with other departments (such as Security and family services) to inform establishment-wide working.’

(Forthcoming Safety Policy Framework, HMPPS, due 2024)

Feedback from safety teams who use the new log:

‘I record a more detailed description of the query. Action taken and call backs are additional information recorded.’

‘Quality is a lot better now and it is easier to read.’

‘Better information is recorded which allows for better support.’

Who has responsibility for logging safer custody communications?

All staff who have responsibility for answering safer custody communications from family and significant others (whether phone calls from the switchboard or safer custody hotline or contact forms that are sent to the safer custody functional email box) should have responsibility for updating the safer custody communications log. This might include:

- safer custody team members;
- communications and gate staff who respond to switchboard calls;
- other departments (such as healthcare or chaplaincy);
- Orderly Officers who have responsibility for checking the safer custody answer machine over the weekend or outside of safer custody office hours.

It is therefore important that a **whole-establishment approach** is taken to developing and embedding the use of effective safer custody communication logs.

Prisons will need to consider who has responsibility for updating the actions taken in response to safer custody concerns in the safer custody log:

- is this the responsibility of the staff member/department/team who has followed up the concern (such as the Healthcare department)
- or does the safer custody team retain responsibility for updating the central spreadsheet when actions have been undertaken and feedback to safer custody?

Ensuring the effective use of the safer custody log

The log will only be as good as the information that is recorded within it. Effective use of the log can be supported by:

- Ensuring the **log is accessible to all staff** who are required to use it – for example by making it available on the internal 'z' drive.
- Ensuring all staff responsible for logging safer custody communications and the actions taken, are **aware that they need to be using the spreadsheet** to record concerns. Include the instruction in:
 - staff newsletters
 - notices to staff
 - handover notices
 - staff training
 - staff meetings
 - Orderly Officer daily log sheets
 - visible notes or desktop guides next to safer custody hotline phone and answer machines and on any desks that responds to switchboard calls (see staff recording poster in appendices).

A webinar recording on the 'Safety communications log' is available to support staff development.

- Ensuring all **staff are aware of what a ‘good’ record looks like**. The top row of the spreadsheet provides an example of what ‘good’ looks like – staff should model their logs on this example.
- Staff may need **initial support** to understand how to complete the logs and ensure consistent practice in place. The spreadsheet records who has created each log and therefore, where there are persistent gaps or inaccuracies in information, staff can be identified and supported to develop their knowledge and skills.
- The safer custody communications log should be **reviewed on a regular basis** to ensure it is being used effectively. Establishments will need to establish who has responsibility for quality checking the log on a regular basis. For example – it might be a non-operational Band 5 role in the safer custody team to run a monthly check on the spreadsheet and feedback to the Head of Safer Custody who may also undertake regular ‘dip-tests’ on the log. In reviewing the use of the spreadsheet, the following questions could be asked:
 - Are there any particular fields that are regularly being left blank? Is this because the spreadsheet needs adapting or because logs are not being completed effectively?
 - How many logs are being recorded outside of safer custody office hours? Is the spreadsheet being effectively used by staff outside of the safer custody team? If not, is this because they are not aware of the spreadsheet or are they continuing to use old systems?
 - Is sufficient information being recorded to demonstrate the outcomes of safer custody communications? If a welfare check was undertaken, for example, does it detail the outcome of the welfare check, who undertook the welfare check and whether the caller received a return call?

Using safer custody logs to inform policy and practice

Having an effective safer custody communications log is **only useful if it used**.

The safer custody communications spreadsheet has built-in functionality so that charts and data are produced as logs are recorded.

The data gathered in the spreadsheet can be useful for informing policy and practice across establishments. For example, it can be useful for:

- integrating into monthly safer custody analysis/strategy reports
- integrating into bi-monthly custodial manager reports (for example, if there have been high numbers of concerns relating to a particular Wing, or a delay in PINs being updated has resulted in an increase in calls to the safer custody hotline)
- informing ACCT assessments and review meetings (see ‘Engaging Families and Significant Others in the ACCT Process’)
- informing Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) processes
- informing Safety and Intervention Meetings (SIMs)
- evidencing an effective gateway communication system in line with the HMPPS Family and Significant Other measurement Tool, OSaG and HMIP requirements
- Group Safety Lead reports.

Safer custody analysts should be made aware of what information is being gathered in the log so that data can be integrated into wider analysis reports.

Charts and data sets can be cut and pasted from the spreadsheet directly into reports developed by Safety Teams.

Key questions that can be responded to by safer custody communications log	Example data analysis areas
<p>Are we responding to family/significant other concerns effectively?</p>	<p>Number of contacts logged from family/significant others per month</p> <p>% of contacts to safer custody that are returned to family member/significant others</p> <p>% of safer custody contacts that are actioned within 1 hour of being received</p> <p>% of safer custody contacts that result in prisoner being placed on an ACCT</p> <p>Number of contacts logged outside of safer custody office hours (demonstrating that families' concerns are being responded to consistently 7 days a week, 24 hours a day)</p> <p>% of contacts where prisoner does not provide consent to share information with family/significant other</p>
<p>Is our safer custody hotline being used for the correct purpose?</p>	<p>% of contacts received that are not appropriate for safer custody hotline</p> <p>% of contacts where prisoner at risk of self-harm/suicide</p> <p>Number of contacts under each 'type of concern' area</p> <p>Number of repeat contacts and amount of time spent responding to persistent callers per month</p>
<p>What safety/risk information are families providing us with?</p>	<p>Number of concerns related to each prisoner wing location (for example – are the majority of concerns related to prisoners on reception wing and could this be addressed by providing families with additional information when their loved one first arrives in custody?)</p>

	<p>Number of contacts under each 'type of concern' area (for example – could an increase in the number of calls relating to prisoner debt suggest a safety issue on a particular wing?)</p> <p>% of contacts where prisoner is at risk of self-harm/suicide (this can be compared with safety data regarding suicide and self harm)</p> <p>% of contacts where prisoner is at risk of violence (this can be compared with safety data regarding levels of violence)</p>
<p>Is there effective cross departmental working in response to safer custody concerns?</p>	<p>Number of contacts referred to each department/team</p> <p>% of contacts referred to other departments/services</p> <p>% of contacts referred to other departments/services where no follow up action recorded</p> <p>% of contacts where details are updated on NOMIS/DPS (for other departments to see update)</p>