

# FAMILY AND PARENTING STRATEGY: 2024-2029

IMPROVE FAMILY CONTACT AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE IN OUR CARE.

This strategy shows how the SPS will review and deliver on key outcomes for children, young people and families of those in our care and how we will do this locally and nationally.

## IMPROVE FAMILY CONTACT AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE IN OUR CARE.

### **PURPOSE:**

The SPS Family and Parenting Strategy has been developed in recognition of the impact imprisonment has on families, family life and communities, as a whole and lays out how the SPS will work to improve outcomes for families and those in our care. Evidence from research highlights the impact imprisonment has on families both financially, emotionally and practically. Research also demonstrates how the maintenance of meaningful quality contact and connections has measurable benefits for those in our care and their families and the impact this has in reducing reoffending. In reviewing and developing our strategy, contributions were sought from representatives of external agencies working directly with families, children and young people, SPS establishments and families. We recognise that family relationships are dynamic and can be challenging, therefore we must take a person centred approach and be sensitive to the needs of those in our care, families, children and young people. Where there is the opportunity to build on positive relationships or develop them the prison service must take steps to support families and those in our care to sustain them.

In supporting positive family environments, social networks and relationships the SPS Family and Parenting Strategy focusses on developing and strengthening healthy family ties through the recognition of the complex and diverse nature of family relationships.

Understanding this we will adopt a broad approach when understanding family, including the wider or extended family network identified by those in our care as meaningful positive relationships in their lives.

For care leavers in our care we must consider the wider social network and support important connections, wherever possible, building safe positive relationships which may include carers, siblings or friends.

By taking a trauma informed, person-centred, rights based approach in assessing the needs of those in our care and their families this strategy aligns with key government priorities. It furthermore outlines how we intend to review, monitor and evaluate our progress and practice ensuring we engage with those in our care and their families to inform our planning and progress.

This strategy further aligns with key SPS strategies and policies, including the corporate parenting plan, Mother and Baby policy, Vision for young people in custody and the Strategy for Women in custody. This strategy promotes building and maintaining connections with care experienced young people by recognising the principles of The Promise.

To achieve the outcomes laid out in the strategy (Appendix 1) it will be crucial to work with partners, those in our care and their families.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Since the publication of the SPS Family Strategy in 2017, there have been key developments both externally and within the SPS. In particular, the COVID -19 Pandemic saw the introduction and use of mobile phones and online virtual visits.

These introductions provided alternative ways for those in our care and their families to maintain contact during a period of change and isolation. As we move forward, the SPS plan to build on the utilisation of these technologies to expand connectivity, both for direct contact with families and accessibility to universal services. It is important to note the use and expansion of digital technology will complement the existing physical, face-to-face contact in improving the health and wellbeing of both those in our care and their families.

In developing this strategy, the SPS continues to recognise the importance of promoting and embedding GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child) through a shared understanding of improving outcomes and wellbeing for children, young people and their families. When assessing wellbeing, it is important to adopt a family centred approach, as wellbeing needs change at different times and for different reasons. Our approach and outcomes promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing

of children and young people through a shared knowledge and understanding of wellbeing indicators. These require that children and young people are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included, to ensure they grow to be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens. These indicators are underpinned by a rights based approach that is consistent with the UNCRC (United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child).

This strategy also recognises international recommendations laid down in the Committee of Ministers (Recommendation CM/REC(2018) 5) to member states concerning children with imprisoned parents. Developing further opportunities to build on parent, child and family relationships and highlighting the importance of children's rights when a parent is imprisoned, if contact is deemed to be in the best interest of the child.

Furthermore, in recognition to the response to the death in prison custody review 2021, this strategy contributes to improving engagement with families and wider social networks in relation to both end-of-life care and a death in custody. Ensuring families feel included and engaged with through both communication and information provision that is compassionate, meaningful, and accessible.

Our SPS strategy further acknowledges, recognises and articulates the importance of sibling contact and connection underpinned by the Scottish

Governments 'Getting it right for Sisters and Brothers' national practice guidance. By supporting those in our care to build and maintain relationships with their siblings, our strategy contributes to upholding children's rights and improving wellbeing. This is further supported by the approach of our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027, ensuring care experienced people in our care are supported to maintain safe and loving relationships that are important to them.

In line with SPS Corporate Plan 2023-28, this strategy adopts a person centred, trauma informed and rights based approach that supports positive family environments, social networks and relationships.

The principles embedded in this strategy recognise the impact of imprisonment for families, children and young people and those in our care ensuring that the needs and experiences of families inform how we work to achieve positive outcomes.

### PRINCIPLES:

- **Families are treated with dignity and respect.**
- **Families are included and engaged.**
- **Children's rights and best interests are at the centre of our policy and practice.**
- **Families are diverse and unique.**
- **Partnership working is essential to achieving positive outcomes.**

These values and principles will be applied nationally across the prison estate and through local establishments. SPS recognises the importance of family contact and connection throughout a person's time in custody. By supporting and facilitating every possible avenue of connection we will work towards minimising harmful separation of family members from their imprisoned loved ones.

Children and their rights will remain at the forefront of our policy and practice ensuring, where appropriate parents in our care can continue to contribute to their parenting role and responsibilities. This will subsequently support and maintain positive healthy and safe relationships for children and young people.

In ensuring we continually review and improve our practice we will listen, engage and consult, with families, children, young people and external partners. This will develop communication networks and facilitate access to universal support services at any stage of their loved ones time in custody.

Our approach recognises that services and supports for families reaffirm the diversity and uniqueness of families and the dynamic nature of familial relationships.

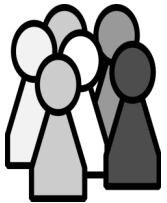
### KEY STRANDS OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy will further embed the principles and services required to

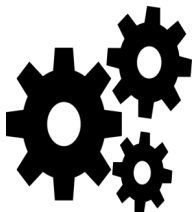
achieve positive outcomes for families and those in our care through five key strands:



**Communication and engagement:** Ensuring that as we work towards implementation, review and improvement we will actively consult with families, children and young people to inform practice and facilitate participation wherever possible. *“It would be good if information was sent out to families, the first time my family visited they didn’t know they needed money or that certain clothes weren’t allowed in the visit room ”(Female).*



**Culture of reflection and improvement:** using self-evaluation based on a clear shared understanding of what the strategy should look like in practice, to plan for implementation and guide continuous improvement, and embedding review and research. ...*“involve the children more - let the kids suggest ideas, as its their parental bond at risk. Bring more normal things and activities that children miss out on ”(Family).*



**Implementation and Sharing best practice** Implementation of this strategy across the prison estate and supporting establishments in its approach, to develop cons

istency. A key part of implementation follows the collation and sharing of best practice across the estate to build on positive ways of working. *“Staff at family visits makes kids feel at ease. It’s important to have space and time with the person you are visiting” (Family).*



**Workforce:** Implementing training for our staff group who come into contact with families, provides knowledge and information to help support their role in upholding children’s rights and understanding the impact faced by families which works towards positive wellbeing and outcomes. *“Staff need to have a trauma informed approach with everyone visiting, especially children” (Family).*



**Partnership Working:** in delivering positive outcomes the SPS will continue to form meaningful partnerships that support the health and wellbeing of those in our care, identifying barriers and being proactive in promoting and signposting universal services for families, children and young people. *“.....options for programmes we can do together” (Family)*

### How we will know we are achieving progress?

To assess our progress against the outcomes outlined in the logic model (Appendix1) that directly stem from the approach within this

strategy, it will be crucial to engage in ongoing research and information analysis both in terms of quantitative data and qualitative evidence. Collation of evidence from various sources will enable SPS to review the impact of our strategy to support further improvements and change where required.

Evidence that will assist in reviewing evaluating and improving our practice includes:

- **Establishment data** e.g. relationships, family contact and engagement, local action plans and case studies.
- **Internal Research** e.g., interviews/ focus group work and feedback from families, children and young people, those in our care and staff.
- **Research findings** e.g. Academic research papers.
- **Training reviews** and compliance rates.
- **Collaboration and consultations** with external partners in gathering best practice.

We will capture evidence and impact through various sources of evidence, which will enable evaluation and review to take place of our strategy and report on our progress. This will include individual establishments leading on local delivery, reporting and evaluation, nation

nally through our family policy lead.

Developing an ongoing process of capturing best practice, data and service user voice we will monitor and review delivery to support ongoing change and improvement wherever possible.

In implementation of this strategy, we will develop a national action plan that will detail how our corporate outcomes detailed in this plan will be achieved.

## WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

The approach of this strategy is to embed practices and activities, which promote positive relationships and wellbeing whilst seeking to minimise the negative impact imprisonment has on families, children and young people. To achieve positive outcomes for those in our care and their families SPS will work towards the key outcomes detailed below:

### 1. Families and wider social networks will be supported to maintain positive relationships with people in our care and have a positive experience when visiting establishments.

- Establishments provide and facilitate families, children and young people with regular opportunities to participate in shaping the delivery of family contact processes and are provided with feedback loops, ensuring families are aware of how their views have been acted upon.

- Child and family focussed visit sessions are made available and take account of school hours and public transport constraints in order to avoid for example disruption to schooling etc where possible, offering both physical and virtual options.
- Child and parent sessions are provided by establishment's out with the regular visiting regime including special occasions throughout the year.
- Provide families, children and young people with information communicating local visiting processes and procedures in clear, easy to read, age appropriate formats i.e. utilising images, videos and leaflets.
- Where it is not possible for families to use standard arrangements for visits, establishments are proactive in taking alternative steps to assist people in our care to sustain family relationships, via email a prisoner, virtual visits and the use of exceptional visits.
- In understanding the importance in maintaining positive relationships including those of siblings whilst in our care, provision of contact between siblings is supported and facilitated through various contact methods inclusive of Inter prison Visits and calls.
- Children and families with additional support needs are actively -

supported to maintain contact through engagement with families SPS will assist with visiting i.e. utilisation of exceptional visits, access to sensory aids and pre visit sessions in order to familiarise within the prison and visit environment.

- A range of visit sessions are made available that are suitable for different age groups and needs i.e. bonding sessions, family learning, homework clubs and movie nights. Visits sessions should enable all age groups to participate in normalised activities including those for young people.
- Promotion to both families and those in our care of meaningful methods of contact i.e. visits, letters, telephone calls, email a prisoner scheme and virtual visits. Working in partnership with external partners to signpost families to agencies who assist with digital supports, where required.
- Establishments offer family induction sessions, promoting and supporting family attendance. Including understanding prison life, visiting arrangements and how families can support their loved one whilst in our care.
- Include and engage families within the Integrated Case Management processes and promote supports that are available for families in the community.

- Visiting environments meet the needs of all children, young people and families through clean, comfortable, child friendly and home like spaces that encourage meaningful contact. Spaces should be conducive to play and positive relationship building between parents and their children utilising both indoor and outdoor facilities wherever possible.
- In partnership with external partners, deliver activities focussing on learning and interaction i.e. arts and crafts, play and healthy eating within a yearly event planned system.
- Work with our partners in education to support and encourage those in our care to participate in their child's education where it is appropriate to do so i.e. virtual attendance at parent's evenings, liaising with education professionals where consent has been established.
- Care experienced children and young people in our care are supported to develop and maintain positive relationships with their family friends, siblings, professionals and other trusted adults in meaningful ways.
- Display contact details of relevant staff and information about their roles for people in our care and their families.

## **2. Families feel included and engaged in the decisions that affect them and are informed on how to access key information related to their loved ones imprisonment:**

- People in our care and their families are supported appropriately in relation to wellbeing concerns and where consent is provided, families will be supported through information provision and updates.
- Develop clear mechanisms for sharing information with families about their concerns, where appropriate to do so. Advise families at the earliest point of the process to share concerns.
- Support families to be included and engaged in their loved ones care planning, in partnership with prison healthcare and external services, when consent has been provided.
- Engage with partners to support a parent's return to the community, continuing support around parenting whilst in the community where it is appropriate to do so.
- Encourage, support and engage families with Case Management processes at the earliest point, through provision of easy to read information on the purpose, process and benefits of engaging. Provide clear advice and support on attending case conferences, both in person and virtually. If possible, offer a subsequent visit



with their loved one to enable families to apply through the “help with the cost of prison visits” scheme for financial assistance.

- Work with partners to support and empower people in our care and their families to access relevant justice and universal services that support their needs. I.e. Visitor Centres, Hubs and other available health and wellbeing services in their local communities in a non-stigmatising way.
- Provide families with relevant information detailing key aspects of a loved ones journey whilst in custody. Information should be easy to read and where possible include visual clips, photos and , particularly in relation to Case Management processes, Talk to Me (TTM), Home detention Curfew (HDC) and preparing for release.
- In partnership with others, we will involve people in our care and their families to ensure their views and any potential impacts are considered in decision making processes.
- Ensure families know how to access and raise complaints at local and national level, if required, enabling information to be gathered and analysed to improve local practices.
- Implement local procedures for responding to family events in a consistent manner, such as compassionate visits. Clearly commu-

nicate policy, procedures and expectations to enable families and those in our care to engage positively.

- Work effectively with partners to improve transitions and positive outcomes following release. Providing information for families on release and throughcare that is language appropriate and child friendly.
- Share information with families in line with Scottish Government codes of practice, including any change of circumstances through information sharing protocols.
- SPS staff will be respectful, consistent and open in our dealings with families and provide a welcoming environment.

### **3. Parents in our care will be able to access supports which assist in maintaining positive relationships to improve their child’s health and wellbeing where it is in the best interests of the child to do so.**

- Parents who are in our care are able to access parenting supports or programmes to help them to understand the responsibilities and sustained commitment associated with bringing up a child, and to develop the skills needed to provide a nurturing and stimulating home environment free from conflict upon release.

- Both mothers and fathers in our care gain a 'toolbox of skills' to allow them to develop positive relationships with their children. Providing age and stage supports through effective partnership working to improve services for people in our care, all young people and their families.
- In partnership with external agencies parents in our care are encouraged and supported to engage in their children's lives, where appropriate to do so. Including staying involved in their child's education.
- Parents in our care are supported to play an active role in building strong, stable relationships with their family. Working with our partners to provide parenting courses to support both parents in our care and their family.
- Support and engage with mothers in our care and those who have given birth whilst in custody to access parenting supports and provide contact opportunities for the parent, siblings and other family members, where appropriate, in line with the SPS Mother and Baby Policy 2019.
- Ensure staff who come into contact with families complete child protection and wellbeing training in line with National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 and adhere to the SPS Child Protection Policy 2018.
- All safeguarding and child protection concerns should be addressed through respective line management structures in accordance with SPS Policy and Procedures whilst using/updating Child Concern Forms.
- During admission process, those in our care are asked regarding their care giving responsibilities.
- Work in partnership with external services and partners to promote access to services, which promote wellbeing for families, including financial supports such as "help with the cost of prison visits" scheme and health and wellbeing supports.
- Through our input to local children's services plans, we will work with our partners on early intervention for those children who are deemed at risk of offending.
- Work with partners to support improved family involvement in the Talk to Me process, where consent has been provided.
- Develop, implement and communicate clear protocols for how families are kept informed about the health and wellbeing of their -

**4. Families are safe and well and have access to a range of services and supports designed to improve their safety and wellbeing whilst maintaining and upholding children's rights.**

family members, i.e. in cases of end of life care, loss and bereavement needs.

- Staff access training on the impact of imprisonment on children, young people and families and children's rights under UNCRC.
- Staff promote prison visitor centres, where applicable, to those in our care and their families. Promotion of these services can assist in supporting the needs of families during their loved one's time in custody.

### Local Actions:

- Establishments to create local strategy groups with local multi-agency representation that meet regularly to take forward and record the delivery of the Family and Parenting Strategy.
- Establishments will ensure compliance with all legislation and policy developments to review local processes in support of the Family and Parenting Strategy.
- Any material change in the delivery of services is impact-assessed in relation to children, young people and families.

### NEXT STEPS:

- Develop a national action plan that incorporates key strands of the

strategy and evaluation of national provision.

- Ensure the Family and Parenting Strategy is embedded within the SPS Corporate Plan 2023-28.
- Engage with establishments and staff on the strategy and how they contribute to its overall aims and approach.
- Engagement with partners and key stakeholders to develop partnerships, which will aid in the delivery of the strategy.
- Consideration of up to date research within the family policy forum.
- Ensure that all aspects of SPS policy and practice take cognisance of the Family and Parenting Strategy.
- Collation of best practice across the estate on parenting supports and programmes.
- Provision of an easy read version of the strategy for those in our care and their families that is accessible at establishments and online through our SPS website.
- Explore provision of information that is child friendly utilising differ-

rent ways of presenting information through video and pictures to both reassure and inform families' children and young people.

- Review information provision across the whole estate and through our SPS website to provide up to date information as early as possible for families.
- Delivery of Family Contact Officer (FCO) forum, to share best practice and development of the FCO role across the estate.
- Engagement with participation groups, panels and families to collate feedback, experiences and views.
- Engagement in joint forums and advisory groups to inform and continually improve the strategy.
- Engage in regular partnership working with prison visitor centres (where available) to gather feedback and consult on processes to improve wellbeing for those in our care and their families.
- Collect and analyse data relating to patterns and trends of family contact including physical and virtual methods.

This outline logic model lists the key outcomes which can be used to gauge how far and how well the strategy is achieving its intentions.

**Responsibility for the outcomes is shared by all partners, those in our care their families and Scotland’s communities.**

The outline logic model will be refined in parallel with the development of the quality Indicators and will then be used as part of a cycle of evaluation to assess progress towards achieving the intentions of the strategy.

Short Term	Medium Term	Longer Term
Staff understand their role and responsibilities in delivering the Family and Parenting Strategy 2024-2029.	More families report feeling included and engaged in decisions that may involve or affect them.	More families, children and young people feel they are listened to and engaged with.
Staff have a greater understanding of the impact of imprisonment on people in our care and their families	Looked after children and care leavers in our care are supported to develop and maintain positive relationships with their family, siblings, friends, professionals and other trusted adults	Increase in parenting supports and provision for parents in our care across the estate.
Families and wider social networks are supported to maintain positive relationships with people in our care.	Families report having greater access to easy to read and understandable information relevant to their loved ones journey whilst in custody.	More families report feeling they are treated with respect and do not feel stigmatised in engaging with our staff
Staff have an understanding of children’s rights and the shared language of children’s rights	Increase in ongoing consultation and engagement with families, children, young people and those in our care to support informed reviews and practice developments in various ways including surveys and focus groups.	Collated evidence of best practice is developed across the estate by family policy lead for sharing with family contact representatives at all establishments to inform and improve practices.
Families, children and young people have a positive experience when visiting establishments.	Staff knowledge and skills in working with families, children and young people in a non-stigmatising and relational way are put into practice.	Families’ children and young people needs and engagement represented and referenced throughout SPS policy and practice where applicable.
Staff have a good understanding of safety and wellbeing and are confident in responding to concerns appropriately in line with SPS Child Protection Policy and National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021	Increase in development of partnerships and collaboration with agencies and partners involved in upholding children’s rights.	Our policy is kept under review in line with best practice, evidence based research, evaluation, legislations and standards.
Family policy lead will develop a national action plan to take forward key actions working towards improved outcomes.	Develop and establish evaluation and monitoring processes for improvement.	Staff have an understanding of family in the widest sense and families feel they are treated with respect and do not feel stigmatised in any dealings with our staff
Local Establishments hold regular Family Strategy meetings with multi agency representation to take forward activities that work towards the Family and Parenting Strategy.	Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in Adult Support Protection in line with SPS Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Policy	Annual reporting is developed on the progress of the strategy and where improvements and outcomes have been achieved.

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This document is also available on our website

[www.sps.gov.uk](http://www.sps.gov.uk)

