

Circular 12/2002 – Statutory Visits

5.3 Schedules of Contact During Sentence

1.1 5.3.1 After the initial visit to the prisoner / meeting with prison based staff, the supervising authority, (the supervising officer in consultation with the first line manager) should draw up a schedule of visits which should comprise at least one visit to the prisoner per year where the proforma attached at Annex A should be completed. More frequent contact may be warranted and decisions on the number of visits may be influenced by various factors including but not exclusively, the attitude of the prisoner towards supervision, overall length of sentence, outcomes from prison based work or programmes, changes in personal or family circumstances, expected difficulties in securing compliance and demands on operational resources.

1.2

- **Note:** Contact for those subject to an Extended Sentence should be undertaken within the guidelines in SWSG Circular 14/98.
- In cases where the prisoner refuses a visit, details should be recorded in the casefile and countersigned by a line manager. In such cases the supervising officer should liaise with prison social work colleagues to ascertain if the prisoner will accept contact at the next scheduled visit. Where this is negative, a letter must be sent to the prisoner offering contact in the year until the next scheduled visit, at which time the prison based social worker should again attempt to secure the compliance of the prisoner. In every case where contact with the supervising social worker is refused, this must be recorded explicitly in the community based and prison based case record. **This procedure should also apply to Extended Sentence prisoners.**
- The (minimum) annual scheduled contact involves a meeting with both the prisoner, and a meeting between the community based supervisor and prison based social worker. Other relevant staff from the prison should also be invited to attend. Even where the prisoner refuses to attend for a meeting with the supervising officer, the latter meeting should go ahead in order that the supervising officer is kept up-to-date on the progress of the prisoner. Where such a meeting is unnecessary, this decision should be taken jointly with the prison based social work unit and other prison colleagues, and recorded in the prison based and community based social work casefiles. **This procedure should also apply to Extended Sentence prisoners.**

5.3.2 Unless otherwise assessed as inappropriate due to a breakdown in family relationships, each scheduled visit to the prisoner should be preceded by a home visit to the prisoner's family, to keep up to date with the family situation and to foster positive family support. Other than in exceptional circumstances,

any Home Background Report on the prisoner, either for temporary leave or parole purposes, should be allocated to the Supervising Officer.

5.3.3 Arrangements to visit the prisoner should be made in conjunction with the social work unit in prison and include a subsequent two way meeting between the Supervising Officer and social worker in the prison. Before this meeting the views of the prison personal officer should be sought either by the prison social worker on behalf of the Supervising Officer or by the Supervising Officer. It may be appropriate for the prison personal officer to be invited to attend. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- update one another as to current circumstances relating to the prisoner or his family;
- agree action points as necessary following the visit; and
- facilitate eventual pre-release planning.

5.4 Pre-release

Home Leave / Temporary Release

5.4.4 The procedures relating to home leave and temporary release are detailed in paragraphs 461 to 471 of Annex A of the National Standards on Throughcare. Supervising Officers should be alive to the significance of home leave for prisoners and their families. Although only pre-parole home leave will require to be supervised, home leave can be a stressful time for prisoners and their families who may have to go through a process of re-integration. Support for the prisoner and his / her family members may be required to deal with this. Supervising Officers and prison social work staff should consider how best to provide this support taking account of the individual circumstances of each case.

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