

# HMP SEND AND THE NAZARETH WAY

A case study of volunteer involvement in a prison chaplaincy

June 2016



**Valuing  
volunteers  
in prison**

## Summary

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HMP Send is a women's prison in Surrey. This case study will be especially interesting to readers who wish to:

- build a volunteering programme managed from within the prison
- enable progression into new roles by more experienced volunteers
- ensure that different departments within a prison work together to support volunteering.

## Introduction

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This case study looks at regular volunteering through the HMP Send Chaplaincy, which involves a range of organisations, serving around 280 adult women prisoners. The Nazareth Way is an independent charity that funds a number of voluntary activities through the Chaplaincy, under the direction of the Managing Chaplain. This case study also refers to voluntary activities supported by other organisations that work through the Chaplaincy:

- Prison Fellowship
- The Mothers Union
- Cruse Bereavement Care
- Changing Tunes
- The National Association of Official Prison Visitors.

There are also numerous volunteers and organisations who come in once or twice a year for special events, which are outside the scope of this case study.



Volunteers have been welcome in the Send Chaplaincy for many years. Historically, chaplaincy volunteering included a small number of faith-specific volunteers and Prison Fellowship volunteers. They delivered the Sycamore Tree Victim Awareness programme, Angel Tree (providing Christmas presents for prisoners' children) and other faith-exploring courses such as Alpha.

Over the last five years, the team and its activity have significantly expanded. This has been a result of a number of factors, including the vision of a new Chaplain who saw opportunities to improve the support offered to prisoners. The Prison Service funds a team of Chaplains to meet the statutory and Prison Service requirements covered by PSI 2011/5. This covers the delivery of faith-related provisions and pastoral care for prisoners of all faiths and none. It is also well understood that women prisoners can have specific issues, including a history of abuse, domestic violence, addiction and mental health problems and high rates of re-offending.

Against this background a vision emerged, to expand the range and depth of support through the strategic use of committed and trained volunteers who supplement, but do not substitute for, paid staff.

*"I am continually amazed by the hours of dedication and effort provided by our volunteers. They give so much support to prisoners. Without them we simply could not offer many of our services"*

*(Lesley Mason, Managing Chaplain)*

## **The benefits of volunteer involvement**

Volunteer roles are wide-ranging and add considerable value to the services provided by prison staff. Effective volunteering is made possible by a well-developed volunteer team.

In addition to the direct benefits of providing this enhanced level of service, the presence and contribution of volunteers can challenge prisoners' negative assumptions about attitudes towards them in the community. This can in turn affect prisoners' sense of self-worth and help to motivate them to engage with Chaplaincy activities and across the prison regime.

The development of volunteering has created a 'virtuous circle' whereby volunteer understanding of prisoners and the prison system is increased. This increased understanding is shared by volunteers with their community networks and raises awareness, facilitates recruitment of more volunteers and supports fund raising.

## Volunteer roles

Via the Chaplaincy, there are a total of 80 volunteers, many of whom combine two or three roles, working flexibly to meet the needs of the overall programme:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Current numbers</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Official Prison Visitors (OPV's)</b>	The prison Governor appoints them, with the chaplaincy having practical responsibility for facilitating their visits. Their role is to visit and support a specific assigned prisoner.	21	Role is done in the Visits Hall
<b>Chaplain's Assistants</b>	Appointed by individual faith Chaplains to assist them in delivery of faith-related services and assist Chaplains delivering other statutory services e.g. prisoner induction, daily visits to those on cellular confinement or on ACCT	3	Long term, experienced volunteers who are trusted to provide mature contributions to faith-related activities, and provide 1:1 pastoral support
<b>Pastoral Assistants</b>	Provide ad hoc or ongoing pastoral care to prisoners with a variety of issues, including provision of specialist services such as Cruse bereavement support	4	Trusted to visit prisoners on the Wings, providing additional support to those on ACCT or in need of support
<b>Making Connections mentors</b>	Providing pre (and sometime post-) release mentoring as described in 'Non-faith-related courses and programmes' below	14	
<b>Course, leaders and facilitators</b>	See 'Non-faith-related courses and programmes'	19	Courses delivered by these volunteers are non-faith related
<b>Faith services volunteers</b>	Attend and contribute to faith services and studies as representatives of the wider community	25	Work under the guidance of the relevant Chaplain
<b>Musicians</b>	Provide music at faith services	6	
<b>Association Activity volunteers</b>	Run or support a number of activities during prisoner association hours that are open to people of all faiths and none, providing a pro-social environment for prisoners to engage in productive spare-time activities	20	Also results in some onwards referrals of prisoners who are reluctant to approach a Chaplain for other programmes
<b>Admin support</b>	Administrative support to the Chaplaincy	5	
<b>Transport volunteers</b>	Escort prisoners to their destination after release	10	

We don't keep detailed records of volunteer hours; a reasonable estimate would be around 10,000 hours per year. The table below summarises direct service hours, excluding hours spent in training or out of the prison in preparation.

	<b>Estimated direct service volunteer hours per year</b>
Faith-related activity	550
Non-faith related courses	2,000
Making Connections	2,200
OPV's	2,000
Pastoral	1,400
Association activity	450
Administration	1,250
Transport	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,050</b>

### **Non-faith-related courses and programmes**

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The Chaplaincy works closely with Activities and the Offender Management Unit. Offender Supervisors include the following courses in sentence planning for the prisoners they are responsible for. Staff report positive changes in attitudes and behaviour of women who have participated in courses.

Courses are programmed by Activities as part of the prisoners' timetables and are delivered during the core day.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Sycamore Tree/Victim Awareness</b>	An accredited programme delivering Level 1 and 2 qualifications in Understanding the Restorative Justice Process led by trained Prison Fellowship members
<b>Living with Loss</b>	Focussed on prisoners who have experienced major losses. These include loss of children due to adoption, significant relationship breakdown, as well as bereavement. This enables loss-related support to be extended to a greater number of prisoners than can be assisted with individual counselling. It is led by a combination of qualified chaplains, and volunteers who assist with small group facilitation
<b>Making Sense of Forgiveness</b>	This 4 session course enables participants to understand the impact of unresolved anger, blame or guilt in their lives. Led by a combination of chaplains and volunteers who assist with small group facilitation
<b>Making Connections</b>	An HMP Send volunteer-led programme accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. It provides around six months of pre-release mentoring. It has recently been extended to support prisoners preparing for ROTL, parole board hearings and transfer to open conditions. The first twelve-month reoffending rate for Making Connections mentees, who had

sentences of twelve months or more, is around 10%.<sup>1</sup>

## Service users

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Volunteer activity:

- supports the faith-related services provided by the prison
- provides opportunities for prisoners to engage with members of their faith group from the community
- provides a range of services that are available to all prisoners.

The take-up among prisoners of activities that rely on volunteer involvement is as follows:

	Who is targeted	Number of prisoners	Approx. % of avg. prison roll
OPVs	Those with no other visitors	21 per annum	7.5
Faith-related activity	All	120 per annum	40
Non-faith related courses	Those with needs addressed by the course	130 per annum	45
Making Connections	Offered to all those approaching release	55 per annum	20
Association activities	All	60 per month	20

These numbers exclude pastoral support which is available to everyone, but varies significantly from month to month.

## Volunteer recruitment

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Volunteers are recruited in various ways and recruitment is an ongoing activity carried out on an ad-hoc basis through outreach. For example, chaplaincy staff or volunteers take opportunities to speak about volunteer work at HMP Send in the local community. This helps to maintain resource levels. The existence of well-motivated faith communities is critical. They are a great source of volunteers who are prepared to offer both faith-related and non-faith related services.

New volunteers are recruited through:

- local advertising through faith community groups
- presentations to local community groups
- word of mouth referrals
- individual direct enquiries to the prison.

The Managing Chaplain, or another senior member of the team interviews prospective volunteers. This will include a full and frank description of volunteering and identification of an activity or role

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are based on a simple snapshot search of the prison database to determine whether those who had participated in Making Connections had returned to prison.

that will be suitable for them. Volunteers are asked to make a specific regular time commitment and to agree to complete appropriate training. Honesty about the demands of volunteering in prison and the time commitment involved helps to minimise dropout rates. Recruitment and management of volunteers takes time and resources and is approached in a similar way to that of paid staff.

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## Volunteer training and development

Prison is often a new environment for volunteers. Recruitment and volunteer management has to be rigorous, thorough and ongoing. There needs to be specific and ongoing Security Awareness training. This is delivered through a mixture of formal training provided by the prison and role shadowing with more experienced Chaplaincy team members.

New volunteers are eased into the experience of volunteering. This is via 'entry level' roles for new volunteers, which enable them to learn the environment and the professional boundaries that they have to work within. Volunteers need the opportunity to build experience and confidence and to maintain interest once new opportunities open up.

Training and development, in most cases, follows one of three pathways:

- **Path 1 - Official Prison Visitors.** After interview and following the national OPV process, an application form is completed and references are taken up. The potential OPV is then referred for enhanced security clearance. After clearance they receive an appointment letter and a guidance handbook. They meet with another OPV for further briefing and familiarisation before starting and are invited to OPV meetings during the year. These meetings help to show volunteers they are valued and support teamwork and belonging. Information is shared about the prison and other volunteering activities. Over time, some OPVs may be interested in transferring into other areas and move from Path 1 into Path 3.
- **Path 2 - Occasional, faith related or administrative volunteers.** Some volunteers are recruited for specific and limited purposes. Examples include: musicians providing music at services, volunteers attending faith-related activities as representatives of the local community and Mothers Union (MU) members engaged in specific association activities. These volunteers operate under the supervision of a chaplain. After interview they are referred for security clearance. Training/familiarisation is undertaken by the chaplain who supervises their activity and in the case of the MU, by existing team members. These volunteers usually continue in their specific area, but may occasionally move to Path 3.

- **Path 3 - Other volunteers.** Recruitment on this path focuses on finding volunteers who are prepared to learn and are interested in developing towards a level of professional responsibility where they may be able to work one-to-one with prisoners. Some volunteers come via Prison Fellowship and benefit from additional training. The general development path for most volunteers inside the prison generally works as follows:

#### **Path 3 Development Process**

1. interview
2. security clearance
3. chaplaincy induction
4. Security Awareness, ACCT and Personal Protection training
5. assignment as an assistant small group facilitator on courses, during which time recruits become fully familiar with working with prisoners, prison and Chaplaincy procedures, and professional boundaries.
6. development into lead small group facilitator on courses.

Depending on volunteers' aptitudes and interests, some go on to develop into different roles:

- course leader
- pastoral assistant
- Chaplain's assistant
- Making Connections mentor
- Making Connections management team member.

Making Connections mentors are appointed by the Governor, sign a Service Level Agreement with the Managing Chaplain and undertake further training in Making Connections processes. They shadow an existing mentor until they are ready to take on their own clients.

Exceptions can occur for volunteers with relevant specialist skills and/or existing prison experience, who can sometimes move past some of the stages described above. The stages are used flexibly, with the key principle being whether a volunteer has experience and is known by staff at the prison. This approach provides flexibility and capacity for the chaplaincy, as well as safeguarding both volunteers and prisoners. It also means that volunteers who want more responsibility are given it only when they are ready and have experience of the prison environment. For example, those committing beyond step five become key holders and receive radio training, enabling them to lead groups and safely operate alone.

The pathways are flexible and build volunteer confidence, as well as giving volunteers a sense of satisfaction in their roles. Some develop into major team members and commit several days a week to the prison by combining several roles.



The fact that most activity takes place in the Chaplaincy Centre creates a sense of belonging and mutual support. Volunteers are also invited to all Chaplaincy staff meetings and the Making Connections team holds additional regular training/best practice sharing meetings.

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## **Volunteer supervision and feedback**

Working with prisoners is challenging. After listening to prisoners talking about their often painful life experiences, volunteers welcome peer support. Less experienced volunteers are able to shadow those who are more experienced; this is key to building team work and resilience within the volunteer community.

The Managing Chaplain holds overall responsibility for the performance of volunteers working within the Chaplaincy. Various supervisions and feedback methods are used, depending on the volunteer's role. It is important to balance volunteer supervision with a performance management process.

Supervision arrangements vary as follows:

- Official Prison Visitors generally operate independently, but have access to the OPV Coordinator who is one of the Sessional Chaplains. If prisoners or prison staff have concerns these are reported to the OPV Coordinator for follow up.
- Path 2 volunteers receive informal guidance and feedback from their activity leader. Very rarely, if there is a significant level of concern, this leader will report it to the Managing Chaplain and appropriate action is taken.
- The same principle applies to Path 3, but Chaplain's Assistants and Pastoral Assistants have regular discussions with the Managing Chaplain or relevant Faith Chaplain. Making Connections mentors also have regular reviews based on exit interviews with one of the Making Connections management group members.

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## **Inter-department collaboration and strategic oversight of volunteering**

Strategic coordination between departments is essential to ensure that volunteers are integrated effectively with the prison beyond the chaplaincy. The use of volunteers is only possible due to good communications with other departments. Security must be assured that volunteers understand and comply with rules. Offender Managers need to understand how Chaplaincy programmes can help their prisoners to develop and reduce the risk of reoffending. Safer Custody and Residential staff need to know that volunteers who have wing access are experienced and can be trusted. Activities need to have confidence that planned courses will be delivered. Overall a strong level of senior management team confidence and support is essential. The Managing Chaplain plays a key role in:

- identifying appropriate opportunities for volunteer involvement
- championing these initiatives at senior management team (SMT) level, with sensitivity to the issues that need to be addressed to build confidence
- communicating with other departments on an ongoing basis and resolving any operational issues.

This role of oversight and supervision has to be done by a member of prison staff. Staff are closely involved with the prison and have the connections within the establishment necessary to identify needs and resolve problems, as well as champion the volunteering that is being done. Without the close involvement of the Managing Chaplain in overseeing the volunteering programme at HMP Send, it is inconceivable that so many volunteers would have been able to work so productively in the prison

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## Barriers encountered to volunteering

Over the past five years a number of barriers and challenges have become apparent.

They have been addressed in a variety of ways:

- **Attitudes.** Prison staff may have had a poor experience of working with volunteers who were well meaning, but unprofessional in their approach to working with prisoners. This has been addressed through communications and transparency regarding all activities, including use of the intranet to provide information on clients, reporting through CNomis, volunteer participation in prison training programmes, discussion with and reports to Offender Supervisors, SMT reports etc. Confidence has been built over a period of time.
- **Systems access.** Use of email, Intranet and CNomis<sup>2</sup> is critical but was initially difficult due to lack of equipment and systems access. Increased terminals and phones have been secured which have enabled a limited number of senior volunteers to have systems access. Authority for this has been obtained from the Governor.
- **Physical space.** The Chaplaincy Centre has limited space to accommodate activities. This has been dealt with by careful timetabling of events and regular use of the Visits Hall for Making Connections.
- **Security vetting.** Volunteers sometimes struggle with the complex and lengthy vetting paperwork. This has resulted in some volunteers deciding not to proceed. The Chaplaincy has assisted volunteers to come and complete their paperwork within the prison, but this is not a service that can be offered easily due to space/equipment limitations, so generally we

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<sup>2</sup> CNomis is the National Offender Management Information System. Data records of all prisoners are maintained on this system.

have to accept some dropout.

- **Volunteer availability.** Volunteers have restricted availability due to other work and family commitments. For example, most volunteers are not available at weekends. Some activities that would be worthwhile, but which do not meet the prison's definition of purposeful activity and so have to take place at weekends, are therefore restricted e.g. Changing Tunes (a registered charity): this activity is run by a professional musician who teaches singing and musical instruments Where real enthusiasm and talent becomes clear community links are developed to enable the prisoner to pursue musical pursuits or career after release. Classes have to be small, so numbers are currently limited by the requirement to hold them outside the core day.
- **Changes in prison service requirements.** It was decided by the prison authorities that all courses delivered in the core day must be accredited. The courses covered by the chaplaincy volunteers at Send are run by volunteers at no direct cost to the Prison Service. In addition, they are of considerable benefit to the prisoners as well as contributing to the NOMS Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour pathway. It was agreed, therefore, to continue running them during the core day.

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## What other organisations can learn from this case study

Volunteering is well established at Send and significant in scope. We believe that particular strengths are:

- a positive attitude to volunteering from the top down
- championing of volunteering at the SMT level, through the Managing Chaplain
- partnerships with community faith groups and third sector organisations (Prison Fellowship, Changing Tunes etc), which provide recruits, funding, resources etc.
- volunteer expectation management during recruitment
- the building of a volunteer team large enough to assure continuity in the services offered, and able to deploy resources flexibly in response to need
- teamwork, mutual support and a sense of belonging leading to volunteer retention and development
- the promotion of collaboration, development and learning among volunteers, and the opportunity to progress in new areas.

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## Volunteering: perspectives from the prison's management

*"I really value the work of the Chaplaincy volunteers at HMP Send. The number of hours they devote to helping those in prison amazes me and is much appreciated. Without volunteers we would not be able to offer and deliver the range and quality of support to those in our care. For example programmes such as "Victim Awareness" help the prisoners to come face to face with*

*the impact of their crimes, "Living with Loss" helps them to work through bereavement and "Making Connections" prepares them for life outside prison. Some of the volunteers provide professional specialist skills which enhance the overall operation of the Chaplaincy. They are able to add extra support to the women in our care at this very challenging time. Thank you."*

*(Carlene Dixon, Governor, HMP Send)*

*"Volunteering often plays a pivotal role in providing support to pre-release offenders to address the difficulties they may face in the community."*

*(Current Head of Reducing Reoffending, HMP Send)*

*"Volunteers add a new outlook and variety of supportive contact with vulnerable individuals."*

*(Suicide Prevention Officer, HMP Send)*

*"As the former Head of Reducing Reoffending at HMP Send I have had the benefit of seeing the difference that the Chaplaincy volunteers have made not only to individual prisoners at HMP Send but also to see how they have contributed to enhancing the provision of resettlement support for the whole prison community. Reducing reoffending is a team approach that only works with the support of all departments with the common goal of wanting to provide the women with an opportunity to change, to seek support and to receive guidance and compassion. HMP Send prides itself on a rehabilitative culture, one that the Chaplaincy volunteers contribute massively to. The volunteers contribute towards HMP Send's supportive and encouraging environment, where the women find an outlet to express emotions, promote positive connections, self-improvement, development. Making Connections provides women with an opportunity to prepare for their release, something that can often be a daunting experience. Pastoral Support provides the women with having a place to go to practice their faith but to also a place to go to reflect, to re-evaluate choices and plan for a more rewarding future. Changing tunes provides a creative outlet through music. The Sycamore course provides the women with an insight in to the impact that their actions have had on their victims. This course alone delivers an insight that would otherwise be ignored or underappreciated. Official Prison visitors provide much needed support to those prisoners who otherwise would not receive visits. The annual events of faith awareness days and celebrations to mark the calendar of religious festivals bring the women closer to their community. It is a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of people."*

*(Former Head of Reducing Reoffending, HMP Send)*

## **Volunteering: perspectives from service users**

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A sample of prisoners at HMP Send were asked what they like about working with Chaplaincy volunteers:

*"I have been in prison a long time, but I will soon leave. The volunteers have helped me greatly to adjust to going back to the outside. They all make you feel at ease and also understand me."*

*"The Chaplaincy team do an amazing job. They have helped me to cope in prison, provided a shoulder to cry on and provide a safe confidential environment."*

*"The courses have helped me to reduce the likelihood of me re-offending."*

*"They make me feel as if I was not in prison. They keep me sane."*

*"They never say no."*

*"I am not sure I would have made it here (approved premises) without your help of transport. It is a bit scary, loud and bright."*

*"There in a time of need."*

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## Perspectives from the volunteers themselves

A sample of chaplaincy volunteers was asked what they most enjoy about volunteering at HMP Send:

*"The opportunity to give a woman a sense of being valued and to build her up so that she can see the possibilities not previously considered"*

(SS)

*"Playing a small part in seeing lives changed"*

(JH)

*"I feel that it is important to make the women feel "normal" and valued (so many of them have very low self-esteem)"*

(AN)

*"I love engaging with the women, coming alongside them and facilitating their preparations for release. I particularly enjoy one to one conversations especially seeing the transformation of some of the women becoming more confident and motivated into changing their previous way of life"*

(CL)

*"The privilege of just being there and having the opportunity to serve the women in Send"*

(AS)

*"I have found it interesting to use my skills in a different environment, see an aspect of life with which I am not familiar"*

(CS)

*"The atmosphere in the Chaplaincy is one of acceptance, support and love"*

(KL)

*"I enjoy the contact with other volunteers"*

(EC)

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## Conclusions and recommendations

We believe that HMP Send's experience demonstrates that volunteering can provide significant resources to the prison service. We would recommend that in considering the potential for volunteering, NOMS considers addressing the following needs:

1. Creation of a clear top-down mandate for volunteering
2. The importance of an SMT level champion who can identify, steer, develop and implement opportunities. There must be continuity in this role for three reasons:
  - building a volunteer programme needs focused expertise
  - there is a need to build long-term relationships with volunteers. If volunteers feel neglected or undervalued it is easy for them to walk away at any time
  - continuity in the key contact point for partners ensures accessibility, and implementation of approaches tailored to the needs of the establishment. This is also a critical success factor.
3. The benefits of Chaplaincy as a natural 'home' for volunteering, because of community links and especially because there will be greater continuity of the Managing Chaplain in post than amongst governor grade SMT members
4. A long-term approach to volunteering, so that
  - growth is manageable and sustainable way
  - organisational resilience is built over time.
5. There is the scope to create development pathways for volunteers. These pathways provide assurance of capability, enable talent spotting and build confidence and motivation in the volunteer team.
6. The commitment of resources in order to facilitate the release of volunteering potential. The growth and development of volunteering at HMP Send has been dependant on significant voluntary above-contract hours contributed by the Managing Chaplain. It is also important to recognise that resources are required to support security clearance, training and administrative management of volunteers.

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