

## Schedule

Dates for submission of Entry Forms/Fees and Work

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### **Thursday 20 November 2008**

#### **Deadline for Entry Form(s)/fee(s) for all projects (including Design Directions Plus)**

Entry Forms/Fees should be sent under separate cover – **not** with your entry – to:  
RSA Design Directions Registrations  
8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
UK

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### **Monday 17 Nov – Friday 12 Dec 2008**

#### **Submission period for all project entries (except Design Directions Plus\*)**

Entries will be accepted at **Brooks Transport Services Ltd** on any weekday within the dates stated between 08:00-18:00, excluding weekends and bank holidays. Entries arriving after 18:00 on 12 December 2008 will not be accepted

#### **Please remember that entries should be sent or delivered to:**

Brooks Transport Services Ltd  
Unit 2/15  
Second Avenue  
Bluebridge Industrial Estate  
Halstead  
Essex CO9 2SU  
UK

#### **All entry forms/fees should be sent or delivered to:**

RSA Design Directions Registrations  
8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
UK

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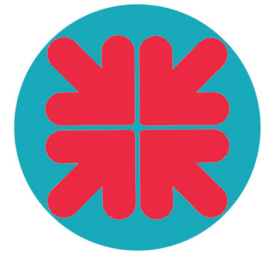
### **\*Design Directions Plus**

**Submission date for these projects** (i.e. Action for Age and The Visit)  
**is Friday 9 January 2009**

## The visit

*designing the prison visit experience*

*Design Directions Plus is an exciting new concept that offers students the opportunity to benefit from valuable input on their project from key experts and stakeholders. It will expose them and their project concept to advice, feedback and input from people who are active in the field.*



DesignDirections+

The Visit project looks at the role of design in addressing some of the complex issues associated with the experience of visiting in prisons. More broadly, it asks how design-led strategies might support the maintenance of meaningful family relationships with partners and children.

### Introduction

Arriving. Signing in. Walking. Sitting. Standing. Waiting. Handing in possessions. Getting searched. Walking. Keys jangling. Doors unlocking. Walking. Doors locking. Getting searched. No windows. Disorientating. Queuing. Waiting.

These are not the experiences of a prisoner; they are the experiences of visiting someone in one of the UK's largest prisons.

Many prison visits by family and friends of prisoners take place each year in the UK and it is generally accepted that the more prisoners stay connected with the world outside through partners, children or parents during their time in prison, the less likely they are to re-offend. There are different pathways that address the risk of re-offending of which this is a vital one but others, such as education and training, support in prison in overcoming drug and alcohol misuse, are also important. Different prisoners – and their families – will have different needs (clearly where domestic violence has been a major issue in a family, then contact through visits may not be wanted or appropriate). This project cannot address all the issues, and so while participants should be aware of them it will concentrate on those specifically around visiting and family ties.

In approaching this brief, you need to use your research to develop an understanding of the system in place and then you will form a view on how visitors should experience prisons. Reflect next on the ways that designers usually create experiences through products and services and then look at the experience of a family visitor and the experience of being visited. Can design play an effective role in addressing the complex issues around this? How can the design or redesign of the experience of visiting prison – and receiving a visit – be part of a broader strategy that helps to maintain and sustain meaningful family relationships with partners and children?

### Background

The UK prison population is currently over 83,000. A proportion of these people are on remand, which means they are not yet convicted but awaiting trial or sentencing. Going to prison does not just change the life of the prisoner but impacts on the lives of their family too.

### In the beginning...

“When he got arrested it caused loads of fights in the family. People were really upset with him again. Mum didn't know at first until someone told her: I felt upset at first, and I missed him all the time. But I was ashamed and didn't want to tell people. We never got any information from anyone, where he was or telling us what was happening.”<sup>1</sup>

15 year old male, father in prison

Visiting times are strict, security is extremely tight and of paramount importance and there is a rigid process to which visitors and prisoners must conform. For every visitor there is a 'first time', then for many it becomes part of their routine. For some prisoners, the benefit wanes as their visits become less and less frequent. It is thought that one in three prisoners in the system never receive a visit while inside.

When it works well, the service provided to those who are visiting prisoners is respectful, well organised and a positive experience. When it does not work, it creates anxiety and stress, can put further strain on family relationships and even lead to violence. It will also have an impact on the quality and value of the visit itself. A bad visit can be worse than no visit at all leaving both the visitor and the prisoner feeling frustrated, angry and stressed. The negative impacts of this experience are then taken home, or back to the cell, leading to problems for the family, the prisoner or the prison staff.

There are a number of charities and voluntary groups who support families of visitors and who are contracted to run prison visiting in many UK prisons<sup>2</sup>. They have a hugely important role to play as intermediaries between families and the institution of the prison. Where they can, they help

1: This and all subsequent boxed quotes are taken from Action for Prisoners' Families publications and used with their kind agreement

2: See the Resources page on the Project web page for details

to address some of the practical and emotional challenges of living with a relative in prison. This can mean providing reassurance as well as signposting families to support for problems they may now face such as debt management, housing and benefit problems and a range of other services. These organisations also produce a range of materials, publications and resources to support families, children and prisoners themselves<sup>3</sup>.

### Keeping in touch...

"We miss him; we want him to know what we think of him. We have to let him know in case he does anything stupid – you know, suicide or that. Have to make sure he doesn't do anything like that. If he knows we love him and miss him he won't do anything like that.

Siblings, aged 13 and 14, father in prison

### Prisons: The Basics

- HM Prison Service and the Scottish Prison Service run most of the UK's prisons. Eleven of the 139 prisons in the UK are contracted out and run by private companies
- Not all prisons have a Visitors' Centre and some visitors therefore have to queue at the prison gates
- Prisons run and host a wide range of services for prisoners and their families. These could include: support during a prisoner's first night and days in jail, support in getting off drugs or alcohol, support for those with mental health problems, education and training including opportunities to take part in creative activities such as art and music
- Often prisoners are more anxious about the impact their imprisonment is having on their family than they are about their own experience in prison. Prisons provide a point of contact for prisoners and their families with many external agencies and organisations
- Prisoners and prisons are defined by a framework of four categories. Category A prisoners are considered to be at high risk to the public or to national security. Category D prisoners are those trusted not to escape and who are given the privilege of an open prison environment from which they are able to spend some time at home and carrying out work in the community
- The majority of prisoners in the UK are men. There are prisons for women and a number of institutions for young offenders (whilst you should be aware of the different types of provision, for the purposes of this project you should concentrate on prisoners who are eighteen and over)
- The experience of prison for men and women is very different; and prisons and the prison services are designed to reflect this
- Maintaining relationships between mothers and their children in prison, especially young children, is extremely important

- As a proportion of the whole prison population, mental health problems are more likely to be a factor contributing to the offences committed by women
- 7% of children will experience a family member in prison during their time at school
- The role of parents and grandparents, particularly in the lives of younger offenders, is extremely important. Prisons and young offenders institutions provide family counselling and education to improve the chances of young offenders once they return to life outside

### Visiting...

"It makes you feel horrible, like you have done something too. They watch you and make you feel guilty just for being there. They search you and make you take your shoes off and you feel stupid and it is horrible. You don't get used to it. You sit there waiting for them to call you. And you feel ashamed"

14 year old female, brother in prison

### Brief

*Design a service or other solution around the experience of the prison visit and the challenges of maintaining meaningful family relationships with partners and children. Examine the value of a prison visit remembering that a bad visit can be worse than no visit at all, leaving both the visitor and the visited feeling frustrated, angry and stressed with the negative impacts transferred to the home or within the prison. Consider the visitor 'journey' through the current prison visit system. Consider how design can support the idea that better contact between prisoners and their families reduces damaging behaviour by prisoners and rates of re-offending on release. Your solution should address the needs of the family and the prisoner and have some tangible benefit for both.*

Remember that for this brief the format of the designed solution is open. You can design a service, a product, an environment, an interface with technology (not internet dependent), a suite of communications, an event, a role or an assembly of all of these. The point is to design a coherent solution with people and their needs in mind; and to communicate the story of your project.

Bear in mind that prisoners do not have free and open access to the internet.

Here are some issues as examples that you might choose to tackle in order to focus your work. These provide examples only and you may identify a completely different issue through your own research; this is fine too.

3: Publication list from Action for Prisoners' families: <http://prisoners-families.org.uk/php/bin/readarticle.php?articlecode=code:/php/web/publications.php&papercode=1>

## 1. Information and the visitor journey

For many, the experience of visiting someone in prison can absorb a great deal of emotional energy. It may involve long distances to travel, probably by public transport. Sometimes prisoners are moved between prisons with little or no notice. Visit times may not be particularly convenient and then there are searches and the sense of being watched. The booking and visiting procedures are detailed; they differ from prison to prison. Then it is difficult to talk openly with the prisoner. So, visiting a prison can be an unpleasant and sometimes upsetting experience. However, Visitors' Centres can play a big role and offer somewhere to relax after the journey and before the visit, and they try to reduce the stress of visiting in order to encourage family members to persevere with what can be a difficult commitment.

When things go wrong it can often be a problem with the design of information and communication. So, what might the design-led opportunities be that could address some of the recurring difficulties along the visitor journey? Think about what information needs to be communicated at the different stages, from the moment of arrival (or before) until the point of entering the visit hall to see the prisoner.

As is the case in the general population, not all prisoners or their families speak English and some will have problems with literacy and numeracy. A number of organisations nationally including the prison services provide information about prison visits. Details of some of these organisations are in the Resources section found on the project webpage on the RSA Design Directions website

## 2. Teenagers

"It would be good to have someone to talk to, knowing that there was someone there that you could always talk to. I think my mum should talk to someone and I think she would go to a group, yes a support group or something"

13 year old male, step-father in prison

Even in normal family circumstances, most teenagers go through a phase of being irritated and uncommunicative with their parents, not wanting to talk or share things with them, particularly about their feelings. For a teenager with a family member in prison this situation can be magnified and can result in a difficult time. Added to this, visiting may cause them to experience a range of emotions ranging from embarrassment, boredom and anger to sadness, nervousness and guilt. The relationship is strange enough and the pressure is on to make a visit a rewarding experience. It can therefore be the case that as children enter their teens they may choose to stop visiting their parent altogether.

One approach is to design services and experiences that try to replicate, within the prison environment, something 'normal' that happens at home. This is not easy. Some prisons have instituted

homework clubs<sup>4</sup> whereby a prisoner can spend time with their child on their school homework. Introducing positive family relationships like this can help contribute towards the eventual resettlement of the prisoner back into the family and the community.

What could expand on this idea in an even more positive and beneficial way? Prisoners often have poor basic literacy and numeracy skills that may be an obstacle to employment and successful resettlement after release. What could be done to facilitate and encourage prisoner and child learning that is mutually useful and fun? How could this help to normalise the relationship?

What could the prison service, and the support charities involved, do to support teenagers and their parents that acknowledges the emotions at play as well as the challenges that the structure of prison visiting creates? How should new services look and feel to engage this group?

## 3. The visit and phone call

Bill found he started getting on better with his children when he stopped asking for their mum as soon as they answered the phone. Instead, he asked them about school, their friends and what they were up to.

Jamal's family are often out when he gets a chance to ring. He leaves a long message for each of them on the answerphone. His wife saves all the messages on a different tape so the children can listen to it.

Managing these two vital lifelines well can be an important part of maintaining relationships whilst in prison. However, they can so easily go wrong and put pressure on both the prisoner and the family.

Whilst there is no formal restriction on the length of calls, prisoners can only make calls during certain periods of the day and there is often pressure for them to finish calls quickly from other prisoners in the queues, so for those who find it difficult to have things to say on the phone, it can be particularly difficult. Bear in mind too that calls are monitored and whilst they may not be listened to in real time, they can be recorded and reviewed. You may also be aware that the high cost of calls from prisons has been the subject of a recent Consumer Council complaint to Ofcom, so this too can place an informal restriction<sup>5</sup>.

Similarly, and particularly at the beginning, visits can be difficult too, for reasons already mentioned.

4: BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7078898.stm>

Prison Service News <http://www.hmprisonerservice.gov.uk/prisoninformation/prisonerservice/magazine/index.asp?id=1821,18,3,18,0,0>

5: BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7470051.stm>

NCC [http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC207\\_prisoner\\_phoncalls\\_supercomplaint.pdf](http://www.ncc.org.uk/nccpdf/poldocs/NCC207_prisoner_phoncalls_supercomplaint.pdf)

Where can design-led ideas help prepare for these contact times and manage the expectation around them? How can they be improved and better managed to help them be as positive and rewarding as possible?

#### 4. Preparation for release

“Coming home won't be too good. Prison does a lot to your brain, because it's hard. It's hard for the family to re-adjust. Mum needs support because the family has grown different. Mum still thinks I'm 13”

16 year old female, mother in prison

As a prisoner's sentence comes to an end, the conversations in prison visits turn to plans for the prisoner's return back to life outside. For many there is anxiety about how they will slot back into family life. After a time out-of-the-picture a prisoner's family may have reshaped itself to manage without them and arriving back at home can disrupt the new arrangement.

For children and young people, it could be the beginning of another period of uncertainty and change. Whilst some will see it as the start of lives getting better, others will be anxious that disruption and worry will follow. It will also often be the case that young people will have grown up and changed by the time of the return, perhaps having particular responsibilities in the home that the new situation may disrupt.

What could happen in those months and weeks leading to release to ease the transition from life on the inside to life on the outside for prisoners and their families? What could those who run the visits at the prison do or provide? Think carefully about what a prisoner might be concerned about – and the concerns of the partner, a child or a parent anticipating a prisoner's return to the family.

#### Design challenges

This isn't the easiest of design contexts to research and there are a number of design challenges to consider.

#### Design at the edges

Many aspects of this project position it at the very edge of what designers might typically encounter. Unlike more accessible products and services in areas like health, education, personal finance or travel, the prison service is not easy to experience first hand. This presents two challenges. A practical one of access and secondly, of managing your time. We all have experience, for example, of airports that we can call upon, and could define problems and generate solutions quickly.

You will need to manage your time carefully allowing enough time to understand the context but remembering that the objective is to design something not simply to report back on the context.

#### Stepping into someone else's shoes

It is hard to get an insight into the experiences of those in prison and of those who visit them. You may have first hand experience or know someone who has. If not, there are groups who support prisoners and their families who you may be able to speak with you.

*At the time of writing, the RSA is looking into arranging organised visits for students undertaking the project in order to provide first hand experience of a Visitor Centre and, where possible, a visit hall (where the visits actually take place). You should check the Design Directions website for details.*

You should also inform yourself of the territory through media and newspaper articles, biographies and fiction – the stories told by people who have experienced the prison system for themselves. There are also a number of very useful websites that give help and insight in this area, particularly those of the groups who support prisoners and their families and these can be found on the Resources page, linking from the project web page on the Design Directions website.

#### Design is a process of improvement

Designers normally expect to create the very best product, service and experience possible for all those using it. In the commercial sector, service brands work hard to create desire and to make the experiences they design pleasurable.

What happens to prisoners is also the concern of public opinion. Some accuse the prison service of being 'soft on prisoners'. Think carefully about what it means to improve the experience in this context. Who are you improving the experience for and to what end?

#### Constraints are creative

The Prison Service is heavily regulated and procedure is critical to security. As a design context this can feel uncreative at first so it is important to remember that designers like constraints. Recognise the constraints and use them as a stimulus. At the same time don't constrain yourself by the way things are currently done. Think about the people involved, their journeys, the process, interactions and environments. Are there other ways of helping prisoners and families stay connected? What can you reference from elsewhere that might inspire an idea?

#### Research and process

Begin by making sure you have a clear and detailed understanding of the issues and problems. Only in this way will you be able to make meaningful and informed decisions about what you finally propose. Due to the unique subject of this brief and the challenges around research, the resources on the project webpage on the Design Directions website will be particularly useful.

## Ten things to consider when you plan your work

- If you wish (perhaps through a visit as mentioned earlier) focus on a particular prison; its individual design and challenges. Look to generate a solution that is the very best in that context. It may be easier to arrange a visit to a lower category prison. Bear in mind that not all prisons have a Visitors' Centre
- You may wish to create a common solution, not site specific, but applicable to any prison or one that uses the network of prisons somehow as part of the design. (It may be that your solution is a service, product, interface or other communication that is applicable in most contexts). Remember that prisoners are often moved between prisons one or many times during their sentence
- People are often more important than place. How might what you design affect the relationships at play? Do you have a view on this?
- Think about all those involved no matter what part they play. You might consider new or different roles for people
- Be the governor. Use your point of view on prisons to set the tone for your work. It should be led by sensitivity to the many people and issues involved
- It could be particularly useful to think about similar kinds of experiences in very different contexts
- Consider how you might prototype the service. Remember that role-play is a form of prototyping as well as mocking up environments or web pages. The important thing is to learn through doing
- Collaborate with someone who isn't a designer; for instance, a psychology, social science or social policy student from your (or another) university who would make an interesting collaborator and add huge value to your project outcome
- Think about how you might test your ideas if access to end users is limited
- Think about how you might capture and tell stories as part of your process

## Project aims

- to see how service design can impact on such an emotive, sensitive and politically-charged subject
- to provide an opportunity for young designers to think about design and their role as a designer in a new way
- to demonstrate how we might work on a problem that demands that we adjust existing processes or develop new ones
- to push the hard edge of service design into areas where it is difficult to gain first-hand experience

## Submission details

The Visit is a Design Directions Plus project

*Design Directions Plus is an exciting new concept that offers you the opportunity to benefit from valuable input on your project from key experts and stakeholders. It will expose you and your project concept to advice, feedback and input from people who are active in the field.*

## How it works

### 1 Hand in

You will have an extension on the usual hand-in date for Design Directions projects:

**Friday 9 January 2009**

At this stage you will need to submit:

- An A4 typewritten executive summary which includes:
  - a a clear statement of the problem or issue and how you identified it
  - b details of your concept
  - c how you conducted the research, the users you have consulted, and how it helped you understand the issues
- A sketch development book
- A3 format concept board(s) (max. 5) visually mapping out the proposed service, system or network or what it is you envisaged and how it improves on what is currently available
- A3 format user-centred storyboard/scenario board(s) showing interaction with the key 'touch points' of your service/system/design and what makes it appropriate

### 2 Short list

Once the preliminary judging is completed, short listed students, whose projects are seen to have potential for development, will be invited to take part in a one-day expert-led workshop. Here you will have the unique opportunity to work with key stakeholders in the project area in order to develop the project into robust, meaningful and user-centred outcomes. All costs will be covered.

**Likely to be during the week of 30 March 2009 (this may change)**

### 3 Final presentation

The final stage will be a presentation of the developed project to a specially selected, high-level panel. Candidates will be given details of what is required nearer the time, and there may be limited funds available to support final presentation development.

**May/June 09**