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HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

CHARLIE TAYLOR

Rt Hon. the Lord Foster of Bath
Chair, Justice and Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

18 March 2026

Dear Lord Foster,

‘Safety, well-being and hope: The untapped potential of family contact in prisons

HM Inspectorate of Prisons published the above thematic review yesterday and I wanted to highlight some of the findings to the Committee.

Inspectors adopted a mixed-method approach, which included survey analysis from 38 inspection reports published between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Fieldwork also took place at eight prisons selected to cover a range of functional types.

Despite many good practices in the eight establishments visited, overall there was not a sufficiently comprehensive strategic approach to family contact, locally or nationally. The ‘golden thread’ of family work was not running through all that a prison does, as recommended so strongly by Lord Farmer. Family work was largely seen as the responsibility of the contracted family provider, rather than a joint endeavour with the prison, and specialist family provision was not accessible to all prisoners who needed it. Prisons were often also failing to get the basics right in relation to visits. With regards to safety, not enough was being done to support family contact during the critical early days and families were rarely involved in supporting prisoners at risk of self-harm or violence. HMPPS’s self-assessment system in relation to family work did not provide adequate assurance or sufficiently drive improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Taylor'.

CHARLIE TAYLOR