

First Person

Family and Friends emailing Prisoners

We have successfully co-ordinated family and friends e-mailing prisoners for the last two years – but I'm sure you won't know about us. So welcome to www.refusedbail.com. Successfully and securely, we have already delivered over 2000 emails into the 10 prisons who have so far adopted our alternative method of communication. This service does not cost the Prison Service a penny.

This is how it works: Family and friends log on to our website, and register the prisoner and the prison of choice. Once the prisoner is registered they can immediately start to receive email message from family and friends. The prisoners can even be contacted by their solicitors, probation service and all parties who have a vested interest in a prisoner's welfare.

After the message has been sent our sophisticated software reformats the email message and redirects it through a secure telephone line directly to a fax machine in or around the prisons' correspondence area. Once the message is received (usually within minutes) they are placed into one of our envelopes – for security on the wings – and then, delivered to the prisoners with the rest of the daily correspondence.

We already have over 1500 happy users which shows we are a tried and tested service that works, and works well.

Our service has opened the lines of communication for the families of foreign nationals and with additional communication we hope this will help to reduce the likelihood of self-harm and suicides through increased communication. Communication is a major factor in prison life and in the

rehabilitation process. Therefore it should be made as easy as possible to communicate with a prisoner whilst maintaining the security of each individual prison.

I can now confidently say we have achieved our aims in enabling effective communication from any part of the world at anytime of the day, thereby allowing our users to stay in contact with prisoners and keep them abreast of today's happenings and not the happenings of two days ago.

With Refusedbail.com you have no stamps to buy, no letters to write, no envelopes to post, no running for the last post and, no more hassle.

At times it can be very frustrating maintaining strong family/friend ties. I know because in 2002 I was sitting in Winchester prison wondering why I hadn't received my daily letter from my girlfriend. It didn't occur to me that she might be busy, tired or missed the last post the day before. So, with educational assistance from Chris Janson, (my tutor at Winchester) assistance from the Prison Service and my own sheer, hard determination – refusedbail.com delivered the first ever email into Guys Marsh prison from a family member to a prisoner. Why didn't you know about us? It is time to allow all parties that have access to a computer the option of writing or emailing their correspondence to a prisoner.

Derek Jones

For more information please call 08700 429351. Email – support@refusedbail.com www.refusedbail.com

A poem written with Alison Henderson's son who at the time felt anxious about his first visit to prison.

Seeing Dad

Before I went to see my Dad
I sat and talked to Mum,
I knew that prison wasn't a place
For laughs and lots of fun.

I asked my Mum some questions
And talked about my fear,
She told me not to be afraid
And things became quite clear.

I had to have a little search
But wasn't scared at all,
I stood beside a sniffer dog
Who chased a tiny ball.
We went into another room
And waited for my Dad,
I thought the place would scare me
But it wasn't all that bad.

My Dad was pleased to see me
Which really was quite cool,
We talked about a lot of things
And what I learn at school.

There was a tiny shop in there
And things that kids can do,
Building toys and colouring books
Sometimes a chalk board too.

Time passed really quickly
And Dad gave out a sigh,
I'll see him soon again next month
So tried hard not to cry.

I see my Dad now every month
I'm not afraid no more,
But I can't wait until he's home
And walks back through our door.