

# Prison Voicemail

## An Initial Evaluation

AUGUST 2017

From February to June 2017, surveys were sent to a sample of Prison Voicemail users asking for feedback on the service. 77 family members and 81 prisoners responded. The research was led by Lauren Mumby and Professor Todd Hogue of the University of Lincoln. This document summarises the findings.

### AREAS OF IMPACT



## HEALTH & WELLBEING

A clear sense that Prison Voicemail was used to improve health and wellbeing within prisoners and their families.



Makes me feel better **96%**

Makes prison easier **92%**



Makes me feel better **97%**

Makes the sentence easier **97%**

"Some days he's felt down in there so but in prison he can't show emotion so he'll listen to voicemail and he says that listening to me at the time, he says it puts a smile on his face and lifts his spirits." (Interview 5)



## RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

It was apparent that Prison Voicemail increases contact and ties with people in prison and their families.



I have better contact with family **95%**

Our relationship is better **83%**



I have better contact with the prisoner **96%**

Our relationship is better **93%**

"My daughter, she's not long turned 9. If she's having one of those days where she's been naughty and sort of kicking off, I'll say, 'right I'm ringing your Dad'. Obviously I'm not talking to him but he can still hear the gist of the conversation that we're having and he still feels part of the family and that he's still very much important when it comes to discipline and ground rules . . . keeps him part of the family circle." (Interview 9)



## RESOLVING PRACTICALITIES

There were several examples of Prison Voicemail assisting prisoners and their families to resolve practical issues and to gather information.



Helps to get practical issues sorted faster **90%**



Helps to get practical issues sorted faster **96%**

"He gave me permission to talk to his probation officer. . . so I was able to put a heart to save that message and then probation could listen to the message to say I've got permission. I said how can we do this quickly coz a letter is gonna take a few days. I was able to scroll through and find the heart cos I'd marked it and she was able to listen to it there and then." (Interview 7).



## BEHAVIOUR

Some indications from prisoners and families that voicemails could positively affect behaviour.



Likely to stop me reoffending **55%**

Helps me behave better in prison **63%**

"We wanted to show by communications that life is still going on outside . . . trying to show him that outside is good and its worth not getting into trouble for. In the world outside we are still cracking on with life, there are some highlights and these are the bits you could be enjoying when you come out." (Interview 15).

### AT A GLANCE

**96%**

of prisoners said voicemail **makes them feel better.**

**95%**

of prisoners said voicemail **helps them have better contact.**

**83%**

of prisoners said **relationships are better because of voicemail.**

**63%**

of prisoners said voicemails **help them to behave better in prison.**

**97%**

of families said voicemails **make them feel better.**

**93%**

of families said **relationships are better because of voicemail.**

**97%**

of families said **voicemail is making the sentence easier.**

### PARTICIPANTS

Survey data collected Feb - June 2017

169 surveys sent to prisoners

169 surveys sent to family members



## INTERVIEWS & COMMENTS

### Prison Voicemail was used to improve health and wellbeing on both sides.

"It helped loads, the fact he was brutally taken away from us, we never ever been separated before the three of us so it was a shock, it provide us with emotional support to know we can leave him messages at any time . . . it helped us tremendously, it was like a little straw we could grab". (Interview 2)

**"It was like a little straw we could grab"**

'Since we found out about the service, we have used it constantly. It has been absolutely brilliant for myself and wife to keep in contact everyday between our main phone calls and visits. Thank you, it has made my sentence a lot easier to deal with'. (Prisoner survey)

### It reduced worry for families and prisoners...

'It gives peace of mind for both parties'. (Prisoner survey)

"Its particularly useful if I'm gonna be out because if he can't get hold of me then he panics. I leave a message and he knows I'm fine, I'm just not at home. . . He's not going to panic if he can't get through to me." (Interview 17).

**"He knows I'm fine... he's not going to panic..."**

### ...and provided a sense of normality.

"Its lovely because it sort of feels like normality and I haven't had that before." (Interview 3)

### It increases feelings of positivity.

"I feel very happy and excited because I'm managing to leave him a message and I haven't got to wait." (Interview 13)

'The voicemail system introduces a little novelty and excitement into our day as it means both parties can receive the surprise of someone reaching out to them.' (Prisoner survey).

### It was clear that Prison Voicemail increases contact and ties with people in prison and their families.

"I'm at the mercy of when he can get to the telephone before we started using and if I was going to hospital and if there was other important information I needed to get to him, I just couldn't do that before . . . it's another way of keeping on contact with him and letting him know what's going on because we're away from each other." (Interview 3)

"It's an added way to keep in touch. More than anything we use Prison Voicemail 2-3 times/day." (Interview 9)

'A helpful and meaningful way to enable users to stay in contact and develop bonds with those they care about.' (Prisoner survey).

### It was particularly useful where children were present in the family unit.

"I think he likes listening to voicemails from the kids, so they're his nieces. He enjoys that because if he calls they don't really talk openly on the phone but on voicemail they leave him loads of silly messages like what they've been up to at school, what they've watched for dinner, silly things but it makes him feel like he's watching them grow". (Interview 6)

**"...it makes him feel like he's watching them grow."**

"Our little one, she got a mention in the school assembly because she got a merit or something like that. I could let him know what she'd done and what award she'd got so when we phone up on an evening, he can speak to her straight away . . . he would say this little blackbird told me that you had a really good day at school today."

'Just like to say thank you, my wife really enjoys the service and she often captures my youngest (5-month old girl) first words which is simply amazing'. (Prisoner survey)

### Customer story

#### Kirsty (Interview 13)

- Partner uses Prison Voicemail to help manage his mental health
- Partner uses Prison Voicemail to ask her to help him with things

Kirsty said Prison Voicemail has been fantastic for both her and her partner. She explained that he sometimes struggles with self-harm and finds it hard to express himself. However, when he leaves a message, he is able to express himself. She said this has definitely helped to reduce his self-harm. She said sometimes it can be hard to listen to his messages if he is having a difficult time but there are happy ones and good ones too.

Kirsty said they also find it useful because he can let Kirsty know if there is anything that he needs such as sorting things with solicitors.