

Local charity seeks volunteers to work with families and children of prisoners in Durham

Nepacs, a long standing north east charity, which runs the visitors' centres at HMP Durham, HMP Frankland and HMP&YOI Low Newton in Durham are seeking volunteers to help support families and children of prisoners.

The charity has a fantastic team of volunteers working across the region, but is particularly keen to recruit more volunteers at the three Durham City prisons. HMP Durham is a Durham City prison for adult prisoners and young offenders; HMP Frankland based in Brasside, Durham is a category A adult male prison; and HMP&YOI Low Newton is a prison for women, also in Brasside, Durham.

Nepacs works across the north east region to support a positive future for prisoners and their families. Its staff and volunteers provide much valued services to support friends and families of prisoners, in seven prison and young offender establishments across the north east and within the community.

Nepacs also aims to reduce the impact and stigma of imprisonment on the lives of families and contribute to the positive rehabilitation of offenders. By supporting and encouraging family ties this can have a big effect on reducing crime. If an offender has regular visits throughout their prison sentence they are 39% less likely to offend again on their release.

The three north Durham prisons welcome over 50,000 visitors each year, who are greeted on arrival by staff and volunteers from Nepacs.

Laz Szomoru, operations manager for Nepacs, said: "We have fantastic teams of staff and volunteers who provide extremely valuable support in our centres, tea bars, play areas or youth zones.

"Visiting prison for the first time can be quite difficult and sometimes distressing. Our team of staff and volunteers provide a friendly place to chat, have a cup of tea and can help to answer any questions or concerns that visitors may have about visiting prison or about their loved ones in prison.

"We greet people from all walks of life, including many who have travelled a long way, so it's important that everyone is treated with respect, and feel welcome in a place and situation they may never have thought they would ever be.

"Our dedicated volunteers find working with families, especially children, very rewarding and also that by volunteering they have an opportunity to meet new people, be part of a team, learn new skills and gain valuable experience."

The three visitors' centre teams are looking for people who have a few hours to spare each week or fortnight to volunteer in the visitors' centre, tea bar, play areas and youth zones. The centres are open daily (Frankland is closed Mondays and Low Newton is closed Mondays and Wednesdays). We are particularly keen to find people who would enjoy volunteering at weekends, which is our busiest time.

No previous experience is required, but if you would like to help out in the play area it would suit someone who has training in childcare. References and security clearance will be required.

If you are interested in volunteering with any of the please get in touch Nepacs on 0191 332 3810, email volunteering@nepacs.co.uk or call one of the centres for an informal chat. For more information visit our website www.nepacs.co.uk