

Visiting Someone in a Scottish Prison

There is no standard procedure in Scottish prisons for visiting, and each prison can operate differently. This information sheet can only give you guidance, and you will need to check any specific details with the prison or Family Contact Officers (FCO's) who are based at the prison itself. FCO's are prison officers who have a special responsibility for ensuring that families have access to correct information.

The Families Outside Support & Information Line may also be able to assist you with the information below. You can contact them on 0500 839383 (freephone) or via the website: www.familiesoutside.org.uk. As a registered charity they offer an independent service and are not part of the Scottish Prison Service. They can help you with any issues raised here and listen to any other concerns that you may have.

HOW IS A VISIT ARRANGED?

If You Wish To Visit A Person Who Is On Remand/Untried

In most Scottish prisons, the visitor telephones a dedicated booking line to book a visit. The visitor's name must be on a visit sheet completed by the prisoner. Remand visits will normally take place at a different time from convicted visits.

Convicted Prisoners

In almost every Scottish prison it is the responsibility of the convicted prisoner to book your visit and to let you know what day and time you can visit. The prisoner will be informed how to do this. All prisons will have a list of visit times for visitors.

Admission Visits

You may be able to visit your partner or relative on the day they are taken into custody. Some prisons will let you do this, but you will need to contact the Visits Manager at the prison for further information.

OTHER THINGS YOU MAY WISH TO KNOW:

What Time Do I Have To Be There?

In some prisons, such as Edinburgh and Kilmarnock, you are required to be there 30 minutes before your visit begins otherwise you may not be allowed in. In other prisons this

time may be 15 minutes. It is always advisable to contact the prison or Families Outside (freephone 0500 839383) if unsure.

How Often Can I Visit?

This will depend on the prison your partner or relative is in and whether they are on remand or have been convicted. Remand prisoners can usually have visits up to six times per week; convicted prisoners are more likely to have weekly visits.

What Will I Need to Take With Me?

All visitors over the age of 16 need to take some form of photographic identification, such as a passport, driving licence, or government approved id. You can ask at the prison or contact the Families Outside Support & Information Helpline for further information. You will also need proof of address – this could be something like a utility bill (gas, electric or landline telephone), council tax bill or letter from an official source. Some prisons will also take a photograph on arrival at the prison.

Is There Anywhere For Me To Wait?

Most prisons have a waiting area in the prison. Edinburgh, Perth and Kilmarnock prisons also have a Visitors' Centre, where you will be able to purchase some light refreshments. There is a play area for children, toilet and baby changing facilities and you will have access to a range of information. Visitors will also book in at

Edinburgh and Kilmarnock Visitors Centres. Staff will be there to help and answer any questions you may have.

How Many People Can Visit At Once?

Up to 3 adults are allowed at any one visit in most Scottish prisons. In most prisons there is no restriction on the number of children, within reason, who can visit with the adults.

What Facilities Are There For Children Who Visit?

Prisons with Visitors' Centres have play areas, baby changing facilities, vending machines and/or hot and cold food available. Some of the larger prisons may also have specific areas within the prison visits room for a small play area.

Can I Take Money In?

Rules vary, but some prisons will allow you to take money for the prisoner which must be handed in before your visit. Money may be posted by using a postal order, but there are rules about this. All possessions must be left outside the visits room (including gifts, cards, children's drawings etc).

What About Property and Clothing?

If you wish to take in property or clothing for the prisoner, in most prisons you must have a **proform**. This is a form which is completed by the prisoner and authorised by prison staff. The prisoner then sends the proform to the home address or phones with the list of items requested. The proform lists the items you can take, and nothing else will be accepted. All items taken into the prison will be searched.

Will I Have To Be Searched?

All prisons take security very seriously, like airport security, and it is likely that some form of searching will take place. See **Information Sheet 10 – Do's and Don'ts of Visiting** for further information.

What Is A Closed Visit?

This means that the prisoner and the visitor are separated by a glass partition and can not make physical contact. If there is a reasonable suspicion that security will be breached either by the visitor or the prisoner, the prisoner may

be restricted to closed visits for either a specified length of time or number of visits. The position is reviewed at the end of the period and a decision made by prison staff as to whether closed visits will continue.

How Do I Get To The Prison?

You may find these telephone numbers helpful:

- National Rail Enquiries: Tel 08457 484950
- Scottish Citylink Coaches:
Tel: 08705 505050/ www.citylink.co.uk
- Traveline: Tel 0871 200 2233
- Families Outside or the Family Contact Office (FCO) at the prison may be able to send you a map. If you have access to the internet you will be able to access maps on the Scottish Prison Service website or directory: www.sps.gov.uk
- If you find it difficult to access public transport, the FCO or Families Outside will be able to put you in touch with someone who could help.

Can I Get Help With Travel Expenses?

If you receive certain benefits or hold a Health Benefits Certificate, you may be able to get help with the cost of your visit from the Assisted Prison Visits Unit. The unit can be contacted on 0845 300 1423 between 10.15-11.45am and 2.15 – 3.45; or contact Families Outside.

Who Can I Ask For Help?

Each prison has a **Family Contact Officer** (FCO) who should be available to talk through any concerns you may have about visiting or any of the issues raised on this sheet.

If you have any special requirements regarding access to the prison, please contact the prison before your visit to inform them of any adjustments or support you may require. The prison will make every effort to accommodate your request.

You may also wish to contact Families Outside (freephone 0500 839383) who can help with information and support.

If you would like a summary of this leaflet in large print format, audiotape or in your community language, please e-mail, phone or write to us via the contacts above.