

Time in Custody

This information sheet will tell you about the different types of custodial sentences which can be given by a court. It also explains which Scottish prisons prisoners may be sent to. The Families Outside Support & Information Line can provide information on each Scottish Prison Establishment. You can telephone them on 0500 839383. This is a free, independent and confidential service for anyone who has a relative in custody in Scotland.

How much time will the prisoner spend in prison?

Remand. An accused person may be remanded to prison or be allowed out on bail. Any time spent on remand is often taken into account when calculating the time still to be spent in custody.

Sentences under 4 years (short-term). Where a prisoner is serving a sentence less than 4 years they are automatically released at the half way point of their sentence. Some prisoners may be considered for Home Detention Curfew (HDC) although this is not automatic and is subject to specific criteria (see Information Sheet No 9). Prisoners serving less than 4 years are generally released unconditionally unless they are subject to a post release condition imposed by the court at the time of sentence.

Sentences 4 years and over (long-term). Where a prisoner is serving 4 years or more they are eligible to be considered for early release on parole (by the Parole Board for Scotland) at the half way point of their sentence. This is known as the Parole Qualifying Date or referred to as PQD.

If the prisoner is granted parole they may be released early on licence on the direction of the Parole Board at anytime between the halfway and two-thirds point of their sentence. The licence runs from the date of release until the end of the sentence.

If the prisoner is not granted parole they are released on non-parole licence at the 2/3rds point of their sentence and the licence runs until the end of the sentence.

What happens if the prisoner is serving a life sentence?

On the expiry of a prisoner's punishment part (the period fixed by the courts) their case is considered by the Parole Board sitting as a Life Prisoner Tribunal (LPT). (This consists of 3 members of the Parole Board). The LPT decides whether the prisoner should be released.

Which prison will the prisoner be sent to?

All prisoners start their sentence at a 'reception' prison or a local prison such as Addiewell, Cornton Vale, Edinburgh (Saughton), Barlinnie, Dumfries, Greenock, Kilmarnock, Inverness, Aberdeen or Polmont YOI. This may be where the prisoner would have been on remand before they were convicted. A long term adult male prisoner will often be moved to Shotts or Peterhead.

All 16 –21 year old male prisoners will serve their sentence at Polmont Young Offenders Institute.

Cornton Vale is the main women's prison in Scotland, although there are small female units in Edinburgh, Greenock, Aberdeen and Inverness for women.

Depending on progress, and length of sentence, male prisoners may be able to move to a less secure prison such as a 'top end' facility at Greenock, Edinburgh or Perth and eventually, they may be able to serve their sentence at Castle Huntly or Noranside open prison. Female prisoners may be housed in ILU (independent living units) in their prisons, usually when nearing the end of their sentence and in preparation for release.



Families Outside Support & Information Helpline 0500 83 93 83

Telephone Numbers for each Scottish Prison are listed below:

- HMP Aberdeen: 01224 238300 (Craiginchies)
- HMP Addiewell: 01506 74500
- HMP Barlinnie: 0141 770 2000
- HMP Cornton Vale: 01786 832591
- HMP Dumfries: 01387 261218
- HMP Edinburgh: 0131 444 3000 (Saughton)
- HMP Glenochil: 01259 760471
- HMP Greenock: 01475 787801
- HMP Inverness: 01463 229000 (Porterfield)
- HMP Kilmarnock: 01563 548800
- HMP Open Estate: 01382 319333 (Castle Huntly and Noranside)
- HMP Perth: 01738 622293
- HMP Peterhead: 01779 479101
- HM YOI Polmont: 01324 711558
- HMP Shotts: 01501 824000