

Travel & Transport to Scottish Prisons & Help With Travel Expenses

Families Outside has found that there are no co-ordinated services for relatives and friends to travel to and from a prison in Scotland. Sometimes a relative may be held some distance from the family home and this can make the planning of the journey to the prison difficult. Some of the information here may help you plan for your journey.

How Do I Get To The Prison?

You may find these telephone numbers helpful:

- National Rail Enquiries: 08457 484950
- Scottish Citylink Coaches:
0871 266 33 33/ www.citylink.co.uk
- Traveline: 0871 200 2233 or
www.traveline.org.uk
- Families Outside or the FCO (Family Contact Officer) at the prison may be able to send you a map. If you have access to the internet you may be able to access maps on the Scottish Prison Service website:
www.sps.gov.uk

I've heard of SACRO. Can They Help?

SACRO is a voluntary organisation that provides transport to some prisons including Glenochil, Kilmarnock, Peterhead and Shotts. However, you must live in Glasgow or Edinburgh to access this. For more information contact:

- SACRO Glasgow 0141 248 1763
- SACRO Edinburgh 0131 622 7500

Planning Your Journey

You must plan your journey in line with what time you need to be at the prison, rather than your visit time and it's usually helpful to arrive at least 15 minutes before the visit begins.

Find it Difficult to Access Public Transport?

If you find it difficult to access public transport you may find it helpful to think about:

- if there is anyone you could ask who has a

car. For example, a relative or a friend to help you get there

- If you were able to get to a mainline train or bus route, is there anyone who could help with this?

Other Organisations Who Could Help

- If you are unable to get help from a relative or friend, you may be able to contact organisations such as the British Red Cross, the WRVS or the Salvation Army. However, these organisations may not be able to take you regularly and there may be a cost involved. To find out if these organisations operate in your area you can phone Families Outside on 0500 839383.
- SACRO may be able to take you to the prison by car but to qualify you need to live in Glasgow, or Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Community Transport Organisations

Your area may have a local community transport scheme which may be able to help. They may not be able to take you all the way to the prison but they may be able to take you to a mainline train or bus station. You can telephone Families Outside who may be able to tell you if there is a community transport organisation in your area who may assist you.

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 (APVU)**. The Scheme is outlined overleaf.

Who Can Claim Help from the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVU)?

You can claim help with travel expenses if you are 16 years or over (Scotland only) and a close relative of the prisoner.

What Other Criteria Do I Need to Meet?

To be able to claim you must also be in receipt of one of the following:-

- Income Support
- Job Seekers' Allowance (income based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
- Working tax credit which includes the disability element
- Child tax credit
- Pension credit
- Health certificate 2
- Health certificate 3

How Often Can I Claim?

You can claim for one visit every two weeks and up to a maximum of 26 visits in a 12 month period.

Additional Visits

The prison governor may authorise additional visits e.g. for you to attend a case conference or special visit. Payment for this is allowed and does not count towards your annual allowance.

How Do I Claim?

Information booklets with an application form are available from the APVU, the prison or Families Outside.

Each time you claim you will need to fill in a **confirmation of visit** form (these forms are in the booklet or should be available at the prison you are visiting) which will need to be stamped by the prison as evidence that you visited on this day.

What If I Travel by Public Transport or by Taxi?

If you travel by public transport you will need to keep all your tickets or receipts and send them with your application form and confirmation slip to the APVU. Their address is: Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU), Freepost BM2257, PO Box 2152, Birmingham, B15 1SD.

Claiming in Advance of Your Visits

You may find it helpful to claim in advance of your visit so that you are not out of pocket. Further details are given in the booklet.

What if it is too far to travel there and back in a day?

You may be able to apply for overnight accommodation costs if you cannot travel there and back in the same day. The APVU will take several factors into account. These are detailed in the booklet. If you are away from home for more than 5 hours you will also be able to claim a light refreshment allowance called subsistence.

Further details and information booklets are available from the APVU or Families Outside. Booklets and Confirmation of Visit forms, should also be available at the prison.

Other Queries

This leaflet has only outlined the main elements of the Scheme. Please make sure you have received a booklet which gives more details about claiming help with travel expenses.

Assisted Prison Visits Helpline

If you have any queries about the Scheme, difficulties in filling in the form, or seem to be waiting a long time to hear anything about your claim you can contact the **Assisted Prison Visits Helpline** on **0300 063 2100** between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

If you find it difficult to get through, you can call the Families Outside Support & Information Helpline on 0500 839383 or e-mail on support@familiesoutside.org.uk