

National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres in Scotland

The National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres in Scotland has been developed by the National Prison Visitors Centre Steering Group in collaboration with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service

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Table of contents

Service definition	1
Shared outcomes	2
Informed practice	4
Appendix 1 service specification	5

Service definition

Prison Visitors' Centres are independent services provided by non-statutory, not for profit organisations independent of the prison they work alongside.

They achieve positive outcomes for prisoners' families and friends and for prisoners themselves by fulfilling three core functions:

- ✓ They improve the visits experience for people visiting their family member or loved ones in prison;
- ✓ They allow families to access independent and impartial advice, information and support, which meets their needs;
- ✓ They voice the needs of families affected by imprisonment to the prison they work alongside.

The service specification in Appendix 1 outlines how funded services are expected to fulfil these core functions.

The service they provide is accessible to all family members and visitors to the prison including those who do not go in to the prison to visit their family member.

All Prison Visitor Centre services funded by the Scottish Government work to achieve the following outcomes:

For visitors/families

- ✓ Families feel welcome, less stressed, and more confident about visiting their family member in prison.
- ✓ Families have improved access to and take-up of practical support.
- ✓ Families have increased and quality contact with their family member in prison.

For children and young people

- ✓ Children have increased and quality contact with their parent in prison.
- ✓ Children have enhanced emotional wellbeing.

For people in prison

- ✓ People in prison have maintained and increased contact with their family and community.

For the prison

- ✓ Prison policies, facilities and procedures are informed by visitors' perspectives.
- ✓ Prison and visitors have improved communication.

For other agencies and local community

- ✓ Agencies and centres increase their partnership working.
- ✓ Agencies increasingly incorporate needs of families who are affected by imprisonment.

They report on their progress towards achieving these outcomes using standard measurement tools and a standardised reporting framework.

Achieving these outcomes contributes towards the longer term goals of the National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group and the Scottish Government that:

- Families are better able to address issues that arise from imprisonment;
- Family relationships are improved;
- Families of prisoners experience less stigma;
- Children of prisoners have improved wellbeing (as per SHANARRI indicators);
- People in prison have more motivation to improve their behaviour in prison and make positive changes to their behaviour and increased likelihood of reunification with family when they are released;
- People in prison have improved mental health;
- People in prison are less likely to reoffend after they are released.

All services must operate in accordance with good practice in governance and financial regulation. As a minimum services must comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and meet all OSCR guidelines regarding good governance and financial reporting.

Services must be compliant with their obligations under data protection, employment, health and safety and equality legislation and are expected to strive for good practice in the management of staff and volunteers.

All Prison Visitor Centre services funded by the **Scottish Government** work within the **Framework for the Support of families affected by the Criminal Justice System** developed by the Community Justice Authorities.

Managers of all funded services are aware of the Framework and how it applies to their own services and their partner agencies.

All Visitors' Centres funded by the Scottish Government should ensure that all staff working directly with families have undertaken appropriate training in:

- Child protection (with particular relevance to working with children in a prison or secure setting);
- The issues faced by families when they have a close relative in prison and their support needs;
- The link between supporting positive family ties and reducing reoffending;
- First aid;
- Food handling (if appropriate);
- Health and safety;
- Any other training identified by the National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group as necessary and appropriate for the effective delivery of Prison Visitors' Centres.

In addition managers of funded services are expected to engage regularly with the opportunities facilitated by the National Prison Visitors Centre Steering Group to share learning and practice with other funded services.

Service Specification:

1. Prison Visitors' Centres improve the visits experience for people visiting their family member or loved ones in prison;
2. Prison Visitors' Centres allow families to access **independent and impartial** advice, information and support, which meets their needs;
3. Prison Visitors' Centres voice the needs of families affected by imprisonment to the prison they work alongside.

1. Prison Visitors' Centres improve the visits experience for people visiting their family member or loved ones in prison.

Essential

Environment

The Centre is clean and tidy.

The area where the service is provided has access to natural light and comfortable seating.

The centre is warm and well ventilated.

Welcome

All visitors are welcomed by centre staff who are polite and friendly.

Centre staff and volunteers dress in informal comfortable clothing and are clearly identifiable.

Refreshments

The Centre provides cold drinks including water. Provision is made for visitors not entering the prison to access drinking water.

Children's play

The centre provides a designated space for children's play with toys and books.

Toilets

The Centre provides access to toilets and baby changing facilities. Toilets meet accessibility requirements. Toilet facilities are well maintained and clean.

Reasonable provision is made for all visitors to access toilet facilities

Availability

The Centre operates consistent opening times and is open for all visits sessions as agreed locally with the prison and with funders.

Visiting Times and Centre opening times are well publicised and accurate.

Accessible to who

Provision is made for visitors who are not entering the prison to access services.

There is a comfortable place for family members not attending the visit to sit and wait.

Desirable

Environment	<p>The Centre is nicely decorated, soft furnishings and paint work are not shabby.</p> <p>Plants and artwork are used to improve the space aesthetically.</p> <p>Music is used to create a relaxing atmosphere.</p>
Welcome	<p>The Centre offers an environment distinct from the prison not dominated by security features and security related information.</p>
Refreshments	<p>The Centre provides a range of healthy hot and cold refreshments which reflect a range of cultural and dietary requirements and preferences.</p>
Children's play	<p>Books/reading materials are provided for adults and young people.</p> <p>Play areas are inviting, safe and offer an exciting range of toys and activities appropriate for children of different ages.</p>
Toilets	<p>Mirrors and vending machines offering feminine hygiene products are installed in female toilets.</p> <p>Nappies, wipes and spare clothes for young children are available on request free of charge.</p>
Availability	<p>The Centre is open during all visits sessions.</p>
Accessible to who	<p>All facilities and services are available to visitors before they are required to go through security.</p>

2. Prison Visitors’ Centres allow families to access **independent and impartial** advice, information and support, which meets their needs.

Essential

Range of information and advice	Information provided covers: Info relating to the visits experience, the rules about visiting the prison, travel to and from the prison, available financial support, the process surrounding liberation and support available to families post-release – staff are able to provide information, which is prison specific and relevant for specific client groups.
	Staff support clients to take up financial support to which they are entitled e.g. APVU.
	Staff signpost to specialist agencies where appropriate.
Support for vulnerable visitors	The Centre has a process for supporting children visitors and provides resources which meet their needs.
	The Centre has a process for supporting first time visitors.
Accessibility of information	Commonly required information is available in poster form in friendly informal language.
	Commonly required information is available online.
	Staff are available to provide individualised support focussed on listening to visitors and responding to their individual needs.
Quality control	Information for visitors is kept up to date with clear responsibilities assigned to staff to keep it up to date and ensure it is relevant.
	Processes are in place to audit the quality of advice provided by the service.

Desirable

Range of information and advice

Families are aware of the Visitors' Centre as a source of information and advice and proactively seek support from the service offered.

A range of specialist advice and support services are available from a wide range of agencies working in partnership with the Centre.

Information about prisoners' daily life is readily available e.g. photographs of cells and family induction is offered.

The Visitors' Centres provides opportunities for peer support.

The Centre prioritises key community education messages e.g. healthy eating/ World Book Day and has strategies to promote these.

Centres work with families to address their concerns surrounding their family member's release and provide a supportive context for them to meet them at liberation.

Support for vulnerable visitors

Centre staff work in the visits hall and support/ deliver initiatives aimed at supporting families in the prison e.g. homework clubs.

The Centre has a process for identifying all first time visitors and offers a first time visitor pack.

The Centre offers specialised support and appropriate facilities for visitors with autism or dementia etc.

Accessibility of information

The Centre is contactable by email.

An interpretation service is available.

The Centre's voicemail message signposts callers to other appropriate services when the Centre is closed.

Commonly required information is available in various languages.

There is a dedicated phone line to the Centre with a messaging service checked regularly providing basic info about Centre opening times & visit times.

Quality control

Commonly required information is available on rolling information screens and is accessible to those with low levels of literacy.

3. Prison Visitors' Centres voice the needs of families affected by imprisonment to the prison they work alongside

Essential

Independence	The Visitor Centre service is provided and governed by an organisation which is independent of the prison.
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Constructive relationship with the prison	The prison is invited to regularly attend the Steering Group of the Visitors' Centres or equivalent committee.
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Complaints	The Centre collects information regarding families' needs and concerns and there are clear channels through which it can work constructively with the prison to address these.
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Representation in decision making	The Centre sends representation to Family Strategy meetings where these take place and uses this forum effectively to advocate for issues of importance to prisoners' families and obtain feedback on their service.
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Voice	The Centre is aware of the prison's complaints procedures and relevant policies and signposts families to use the complaints procedure where appropriate.
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	The Centre works in partnership with other agencies and community organisations to ensure that they recognise and incorporate the needs of prisoners' families.
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Desirable

Independence	Prisoners in custody are aware of the role of the Visitors' Centre and how it can support their families.
Constructive relationship with the prison	<p>The Centre facilitates dialogue between families and the prison on minor issues and complaints within the constraints of data protection rules.</p> <p>All relevant prison staff and agencies working in the prison are aware of the role of the Visitor's Centre and how it can support families.</p> <p>Where visits are refused the centre has written information about the prison procedure and a protocol for centre staff.</p>
Complaints	The Centre has an agreed point of contact with the prison and this is used as a two-way channel to communicate regarding issues affecting visits and visitors.
Representation in decision making	<p>The Centre provides input in to decisions which may affect visitors or the families e.g. changes to visit times.</p> <p>The Centre sends representation to all relevant prison committees e.g. resettlement, suicide prevention, drug strategy and uses these forums effectively to advocate for issues of importance to prisoners' families.</p>
Voice	<p>The Centre shares appropriate management info regarding client numbers and issue trends with key prison contacts.</p> <p>The Centre facilitates a Visitors Forum to bring together visitors with decision makers in the prison to discuss areas of concern.</p> <p>The Centre is recognised by local stakeholders as having expertise regarding the needs of prisoners families.</p>
