

# Supporting children and young people with a sibling in prison / secure care



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## When you are supporting a care-experienced child or young person, there are some important questions to ask them...

**Do you have a sibling(s)?**

**What do we mean by 'sibling'?**

For many care-experienced children and young people, the definition of a sibling can be broad; not limited to immediate siblings or blood relatives, it can include step-siblings, foster siblings, cousins, residents of the same placement, and any other young people they may be growing up with.



[Sibling Definitions – Staying Connected Project on Vimeo](#)

**Why is it important to stay connected with siblings?**



[Sibling Voices – Staying Connected Project on Vimeo](#)

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## If their sibling is in prison or secure care...

**Do you want to have contact with them?**

**Are you able to have contact with them?**

The child or young person may not be legally allowed contact with their sibling or sibling-like person in prison or secure care. In this case, they may need [a different kind of emotional support](#) to come to manage their feelings surrounding this.

**Where are they?**

If their sibling is in prison, a child or young person might not know where they are. The person held in prison is the only one who can share their location. To locate them, you can write to Scottish Prison Service HQ and have a letter passed onto the person in prison. On the envelope, write the person's full name, DOB, and prison number (if known). Place this into another envelope and address this to:



**Communications Branch  
Office of the Chief Executive  
One Lochside  
1 Lochside Avenue  
Edinburgh EH12 9DJ**

It is up to the person in prison to respond to this letter and share their location. They may choose not to, and the child or young person might need [support](#) with this decision.

Similarly, with a sibling in secure care, you may need to go through social work networks to locate them. The child or young person must disclose their desire for contact with their sibling to you as their social worker so that you are able to follow this up.

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## Having found out this important information, you might be left with the question: *How do I facilitate contact?*



### Visiting Prison or Secure Care

You can help a child or young person stay in contact with their sibling by supporting them to visit them in prison or secure care.

#### Arrange a [prison](#) or [secure care](#) visit

Different establishments have different visiting protocols and times. For up-to-date information on how to book a prison visit, you can get in contact with the relevant prison or prison Visitors' Centre.

To book a visit with a sibling in secure care, you can also get in contact with the relevant secure care provider [here](#).

#### Look into [Children's Visits](#)

If their sibling is in a prison, they may be entitled to a more relaxed kind of visit, which is available at some prisons for siblings. Contact the relevant prison or prison Visitors' Centre to find out more.

#### Get in touch with the [Family Contact Officer](#) at the relevant prison for more information and support

Some secure care environments also have a similar dedicated family service. Find out more by getting in touch with the [relevant secure care provider](#).

## If the child or young person is under 16 years old, they must be accompanied into their visit by a responsible adult.



If you are going to accompany the child or young person to their visit yourself, it can be useful to...

### Prepare yourself for the visit

Visiting prison can be daunting, and it is difficult to know what to expect. It can be useful for you, as a social worker, to become acquainted with the prison environment and processes in order to support a child or young person with their visit. This [video](#) walks you through the visiting process within the prison environment.

Visiting a secure care environment can feel similarly unfamiliar. When you visit secure care, you will also have to go through security checks as with prison visiting. Find out more [here](#).

### Prepare the child or young person for the visit

It can also help children feel better about visiting prison if they know more about where their sibling is and what the visiting experience will be like. This [video](#) walks children and young people through the visiting process and also comes in a [written form](#).

You can also help prepare the child or young person for a visit to secure care by giving an insight into what the process will look like [here](#).

### Get support with the [travel arrangements](#) associated with visiting

### Get support for the travel costs associated with visiting

Up-to-date information on financial support through the help with prison visits scheme for people visiting prison can be found [here](#). The child or young person can apply for the help with prison visits scheme [here](#), but they may need your support to do so.

When visiting secure care, financial support is dependent on the discretion of local authorities.

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## On the day...

Make sure you / the child or young person have [everything you need to bring with you to the visit](#)

There is also information available on items you cannot bring with you when visiting [secure care](#).

### What else do you need to know?

You may need to arrive a little while before your visit. This differs at each establishment. To find out more or to check anything you are uncertain about, contact the relevant [prison](#) or [secure care](#) establishment.

Check in with the [Prison Visitors' Centre](#) for support and information, if visiting a prison that has this service available

Find out more about how to get in touch with the relevant Visitor's Centre [here](#).

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## After the visit...

Support the child or young person [following their visit](#)

Difficult emotions can arise around a sibling's imprisonment not only immediately after a visit, but also in the days that follow – or at any other point.



### Supporting Other Forms of Contact

Support the child or young person to call their sibling via [video](#)

Support the child or young person to [email](#) their sibling

Support the child or young person to call their sibling via telephone –

To make a telephone call, the person in prison must have the contact details of the person they are calling added to their Approved Contact list. Find out more [here](#).

You can also support them to use [Prison Voicemail](#).

Support the child or young person to [write](#) to their sibling



## Emotional and practical support

### Speak to the child or young person about their sibling's imprisonment –

This [resource](#) provides guidance on how to approach this discussion with a child or young person.

### Put the child or young person in touch with advocacy services, including:



[Who Cares? Scotland](#)



[Scottish Child Law Centre](#)



[The Why Not? Trust](#)



[Children and Young People's  
Commissioner Scotland](#)



[Clan ChildLaw](#)

### Communicate with other professionals that are supporting the child or young person (eg. education)

To ensure the child or young person has opportunity to share their circumstances with them (if they wish to) in order to receive wraparound support.

### Put the child or young person in touch with [Families Outside](#) for information and support through the [Helpline](#) or resources on the [website](#)