



COVID-19

RESUMPTION OF PRISON VISITS Q & A

It's been 17 weeks since we made the difficult decision to suspend physical visits and, since then, we have been working on ways in which we can support and maintain family contact. Virtual visits are taking place in all establishments and mobile phones are now in 11 establishments, with roll out to the remaining establishments happening as quickly as possible.

As restrictions are being gradually eased across the county, we have been looking at ways in which physical visits can resume. In planning for this, our key consideration has been to ensure that the changes we make are appropriate and safe.

We know that you will be anxious to see your loved ones in person again. However, the threat of the virus has not gone away, so visits cannot simply return to 'normal'.

We continue to follow the current guidance from Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland, and, in order to keep us all safe, will be implementing some changes to visits. These will be kept under review as we move forward. We understand you will have a number of questions regarding how the system will operate in practice and as such this Question and Answer sheet is designed to help:

IMPORTANT

Please do not come to any prison if you are suffering from any COVID-19 related symptoms. They are:

a high temperature or fever

a new continuous cough

a loss of, or change in sense of smell or taste

Anyone observed to be displaying COVID-19 symptoms will be refused entry.

If you consider yourself to be 'high risk', it is perhaps best for you not to visit at this time and to keep using Virtual Visits and phone calls instead.

1. When will physical visits start again?

We are planning for physical visits being available in all establishments by Monday 3 August 2020.

2. How many visitors are allowed?

The requirement to maintain physical distancing means that there will be restrictions on the number of visits that can take place at any one time, as well as the number of visitors that can attend a visit.

For the majority of establishments, a maximum of 3 visitors will be allowed at each visit. At this time because of the physical restrictions of the site and the need to maintain physical distancing, HMP Barlinnie can only allow 2 visitors per visit.

These visitors must come from no more than 2 households. Staff will require to confirm this, so visitors must bring a proof of address with them. Suitable examples include a utility bill, council tax statement or bank statement.

3. Can children visit?

Yes, children can visit but each child will be counted as one of the visitors. This will be kept under review, as we need to ensure that effective distancing is maintained in the visits room.

As the maximum number of visitors in the majority of establishments is three, including any children, and as children must be accompanied, the maximum number of children per visit will be two – with the exception of HMP Barlinnie where the maximum will be 1 child. You will note that the number of children able to visit is limited. It will not be possible for other children to wait in the visitor centre or elsewhere on the premises whilst visits are taking place.

As with in the community, children aged 0-11 (under 12) do not have to physically distance from adults.

At the moment, there will be no separate 'Children's Visit' sessions. We fully appreciate the importance of these visits, both for those in our care and for their children. It is our attention that these visits will resume as soon it is safely possible to do so. The action that we are taking is motivated by the desire to ensure the health and wellbeing of those who live, work and visit our prisons.

4. What time will visits take place?

As we are resuming visits at a time when prisons are still operating a restricted regime, it has been necessary to review, and in some cases, change visit session times.

In most establishments, visits will take place 7 days a week but evening visits will not be available in any establishment at this time.

Timetables for individual establishments are published on the SPS website at <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

5. How do I book a visit?

The arrangements for booking visits at this time may vary slightly between establishments and may not be the same as you have been used to in the past. Details of revised booking procedures and visiting times are available on the SPS website at <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

6. How often can I visit?

We recognise that you will want to visit your loved one as often as possible. However due to the requirement to maintain 2 metre physical distancing, we have to reduce the numbers of people in the visit room meaning that fewer visits can take place at any one time.

In order to ensure that everyone has equal access to visit sessions, it is unlikely that you will be able to visit as frequently as you did previously.

As guidance changes, we will review our visit sessions and increase capacity and frequency where possible.

7. What will happen when I arrive for the visit?

As always, it is important that you arrive in good time before the visit sessions begins. Given that you may be required to queue for entry, as has been the case for many shops/supermarkets in the community, please dress appropriately for the weather. Wherever possible we will allow visitors to wait on the premises but this may be more difficult at some establishments than others.

When you enter the building, please ensure you are wearing a face covering; the same as you do for entering shops.

When you approach the desk, please follow any signage and adhere to floor markings to ensure the necessary 2 metre physical distance.

When booking in, you may be asked to remove your mask temporarily for the purposes of confirming your ID.

8. Do I need to wear a face covering?

You do not need to wear a face covering during the actual visit as 2 metre physical distancing will be maintained between you and the person you are visiting.

However, you **must** wear a face covering at all other times inside the prison. This is a precautionary measure as it will be more difficult to maintain a 2 metre distance when entering and exiting the prison and on your journey to and from the visit room.

As in the community, children under the age of five and those with certain medical conditions do not require to wear a face covering. However, anyone aged 12 or over, and who cannot for medical reasons wear a mask, will be required to wear a face shield. This will be provided by the prison and should be returned at the end of the visit.

9. Will there be face masks and hand sanitiser available?

We would ask that you bring your own face covering however there will be disposable masks available for those who have come without one.

There will be hand sanitiser available and we encourage you to use this when entering and exiting the building.

10. Can I hug the person I am visiting?

Children aged 0-11 (under 12) do not need to maintain physical distancing and can hug the person they are visiting in custody

Physical contact will not be permitted between those in custody and any visitors aged 12 and over, as 2 metre physical distancing must be maintained at all times. We know that this will disappoint many family members as well as those in our care however the need to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those visiting, living and working in our prisons must be our paramount concern.

11. Will I be searched?

SPS will continue to apply our standard security protocols, including security scanning, searching and the deployment of detection dogs.

Please note that staff will be wearing PPE during this process. This will include a disposable apron, a face mask and gloves. This is to mitigate for the fact that 2 metre distancing cannot be observed during these procedures.

12. Can I use the toilets when I am in the building?

Yes. Enhanced arrangements for maintaining hygiene standards have been made so these facilities can be used as normal. Please ensure that you wash your hands thoroughly, for at least 30 seconds, after use.

13. Will refreshments be available?

It will not be possible to provide refreshments usually available at visits in all establishments. The availability of vending machines will be clearly indicated in the specific prison information sheets which can be found by clicking on this link <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

14. Can I hand in property?

In order to minimise physical contacts between visitors and those living and working in prison, the physical handing over of property is not possible at this time. However, this will be kept under review and families will be advised when it is possible to resume this service.

Property can still be posted into the prison.

15. Can I hand in cash for PPC?

For the same reason as above, it is still not possible for you to hand in money at this time. However, you can still post money into the prison or transfer money electronically.

We are in the process of refining this service to make it easier for friends and family to use. For full details of how to use the online process for paying in money, please visit the SPS website at <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

16. Will I be able to store my belongings while I am visiting?

Arrangements may vary from prison to prison but it will be possible to securely store your personal property.

17. Will the Visitors Centre be open?

All of the Visitors Centres are eager to resume services and will do so as soon as it practical and safe to do so. Details of Visitors Centre provision will be provided at the prison and on the SPS website as soon as possible.

Every establishment that has a Visitors Centre will be working with that centre to ensure that the needs of visitors are catered for as well as they possibly can be.

18. Are Virtual Visits still taking place?

Yes, Virtual Visits continue to be available in every establishment. For more information on how these work, follow this link –

<https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

There is also an information video available here –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0SFZZoGbmM>

19. Is it safe to visit the prison?

Yes. Visits would not be resuming if we believed otherwise.

The whole visits process has been subject to rigorous risk assessment. We have implemented additional cleaning protocols and we will ensure that all tables and chairs are cleaned in between each visit session. We would expect that everyone visiting prisons follows the guidance provided and observes the distancing and hygiene requirements in place.

We know that the last few months have been difficult and testing for many families across Scotland. We are trying to do all we can to make the visit process as straight forward as possible. We will continue to review visit arrangements and make any adjustments we can to enhance the quality of these visits.

20. Where can I get more information?

For more specific information, we advise that you call the particular prison you intend on visiting and ask to speak with a Family Contact Officer (FCO).

Below are the contact numbers for FCOs at each establishment. Please note these phone lines may not be staffed at all times during the day, but there is an answer machine service so please leave your name and contact details and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

Establishment	FCO contact number
HMP Addiewell	
HMP Barlinnie	0141 770 2037
HMP Castle Huntly	01382 319333
HMP YOI Cornton Vale	01786 835325
HMP Dumfries	01387 274625
HMP Edinburgh	0131 444 3113
HMP Glenochil	01259 767275
HMP Grampian	01779 485680
HMP Greenock	01475 787801 (ext 213)
HMP Inverness	01463 229064
HMP Kilmarnock	01563 548872
HMP Low Moss	0141 762 9557
HMP Perth	01738 637198
HMYOI Polmont	01324 711558
HMP Shotts	01501 824032

If an establishment has a Visitors Centre, we have also provided the information below for your convenience.

COVID-19 Contacts for Family Organisation's & Visitor Centres		
	Families Outside	<p>: https://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/families-outside-support-for-families-covid-19-update/</p> <p>Helpline: 0800 254 0088 (this should be the first port of call)</p> <p>email: support@familiesoutside.org.uk</p> <p>text: text Famout followed by your message to 60777</p> <p>website: www.familiesoutside.org.uk</p> <p>Twitter: @FamiliesOutside</p>
HMP Addiewell Prison Visitors' Centre	Cyrenians	<p>Supporting families remotely, individuals can contact staff at any time by email or phone (visitorcentre@cyrenians.scot or 07522907329). Staff will respond to all messages and email remotely during core hours 12.30 - 4.30pm (Tuesday - Sunday). The Visitor Centre landline is also being re-directed to this mobile number.</p> <p>Promoting Families Outside Helpline and the various other ways of contacting prisoners/making payments, etc.</p> <p>These details have also been shared with the LOOP peer support facebook</p>
HMP Barlinnie Prison Visitors' Centre	The Croft	<p>Staff are available via help@barlinnievisitorscentre.org anytime and 07484 664 950 10.30am-6.30pm for emotional support and questions.</p>

		<p>website enquiries form https://www.barlinnievisitorscentre.org/support-chat/</p> <p>Continuing to provide food assistance and one-to-one support from a base at the local church - people can phone the mobile above to arrange for staff to be available to open up at the church (all staff are very local).</p>
HMP Cornton Vale Prison Visitors Centres	Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Group	<p>Staff are working remotely between 10 – 6pm They can contact staff by email sharonsicjg@outlook.com or phone 07518 012314 Facebook and Twitter accounts available @Family Help Hub @SICJG1</p>
HMP Polmont Prison Visitors' Centre	CrossReach	<p>Remotely providing information and support via email PolmontVisitorsCentre@crossreach.org.uk and phone between Monday and Friday 10.00am – 4.00pm Tel:07780249699</p>
HMP Perth Prison Visitors' Centre	CrossReach	<p>Providing support through email perth.visitorscentre@crossreach.org.uk Families who call the centre will be advised by answer message to call 07464 828216.</p> <p>The days and times staff will respond to enquiries are as follows:</p> <p>12 noon - 4.00 pm (Monday) 11.30 am - 6.00 pm (Tuesday, Thursday & Friday) 11.30 am - 5.00 pm (Wednesday) 1.15 pm - 4.00 pm (Saturday)</p>
HMP Low Moss Prison Visitors' Centre	Early Years Scotland	<p>Staff are all working remotely and can be contacted by phone during these times: Mon – 1 – 5pm Tues – 10 -5pm, Wed – 9.30 – 5pm Thurs – 12 – 5pm Fri – 10 -5pm Gavin Hamilton (Centre co-ordinator) – 07387414271 / gavin.hamilton@earlyyearsscotland.org Karen McKay (Family Support Worker) – 07387414282 / karen.mckay@earlyyearsscotland.org Nicola Roy (Early Years Practitioner) – 07387414270 / nicola.roy@earlyyearsscotland.org</p>
HMP Shotts Prison Visitors' Centre	Getting Better Together	<p>Staff have set up a facebook group - https://www.facebook.com/groups/HMPShottsVisitorCentre/ which will be accessible for families at any time. Calls diverted to 07425628015 this will be staffed from 9am till 8pm daily for families. Can also be contacted by email - gbtvisitorhub@btconnect.com</p>
HMP Kilmarnock	Centrestage	<p>Staff working remotely, can support via telephone between Monday and Friday 9.00 – 5.00 pm on 07778158097</p>

Prison Visitors' Centre		
HMP Inverness Prison Visitors' Centre	Action for Children	
HMP Grampian Prison Visitors' Centre	Action for Children	Telephone support on 07877 170244 and Skype support Monday and Friday 9.00 – 5.00 pm Facebook: SeadaFCHH Skype: Seada.rodden@actionforchildren.org.uk
HMP Glenochil Prison Visitors' Centre	Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Group	Staff are working remotely between 10 – 6pm They can contact staff by email sharonsicjg@outlook.com or phone 07518 012314 Facebook and Twitter accounts available
HMP Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre	Barnardos	Staff are continuing to offer family support remotely. They are liaising with the senior prison team on any families they feel would require additional support. Offering support via phone along with food parcels from their food bank; these are being delivered door to door in exceptional circumstances. They are also able to offer small grant's to families who are in crisis for food and utilities, this for obvious reasons is not widely publicised. Phone number is 0131 444 3098