



COVID-19

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND VISITORS

COVID-19 is impacting on all areas of life including those we care for in prisons. On Tuesday 24 March the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) made the difficult decision to suspend visits. We are prioritising working on ways in which we can continue to support and maintain family contact and appreciate your patience and understanding during what must be an anxious time.

The SPS has introduced a Family Support Line, available on 0131 330 3888. This line will provide family and friends service information between 9am and 3pm each week day. Please note that we are unable to discuss the detail of personal issues relating to individuals, and as indicated below your main access should still be direct to establishments; however, should you have specific worries about a relative in prison and have been unable to make contact through the establishment we will ensure that your concerns are passed on.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions are outlined below which we hope you find useful. These will be regularly updated to reflect the current situation.

1. Can I visit someone in prison?

At the moment all visits are suspended across the prison estate. Critical Agents visits will continue to be facilitated but, as our courts reduce their business, it is anticipated that the number of these visits will also reduce.

2. What is the situation regarding Home Leaves and other forms of community access? What about progression and Parole Hearings?

All temporary absences, including Home Leave, Work Placements and Escorted Leave have been suspended. Due to restrictions on movement across the country, progression planning has now been suspended. However, pre-release case conferences will continue to take place and those who are approaching critical dates will be prioritised to ensure they are not disadvantaged. Parole hearings will be conducted by teleconference where possible. Outstanding immediate re-release hearings will go ahead by telephone if necessary.

3. How can families hand in money and property?

Due to the current restrictions, you can no longer hand in money or property at establishments but you can continue to send money and property to the establishment.

The SPS has introduced a new process where families can transfer money via their own online banking accounts to an SPS prisoner funds account. SPS will aim to make the funds available to the prisoner within 2-3 working days of the payment being received into our prisoner funds bank account. Further information and guidance can be found [here](#).

4. How can families raise concerns about those in custody?

Any concerns about the wellbeing of someone in our care should be reported via the main establishment telephone number which can be found on our website. These concerns will be directed to the appropriate person or team.

5. What alternatives are the SPS using to maintain family contact?

The SPS recognises the importance of supporting and maintaining family contact, especially during this challenging time. All establishments are being encouraged to promote the Email a Prisoner Scheme, which also allows those in custody to respond. We aim to have Prisoner Voicemail operational next week. Details of this service, how it works and how you can access it will be published when they become available.

The SPS will provide everyone in our care with a free allowance of £2.50 per week on their PIN phone balance. The weekly £1 TV rental fee has also been suspended and will no longer be deducted from people in our care.

6. Are the SPS considering the emergency release of prisoners?

Emergency release of prisoners is a decision for the Scottish Government. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill provides new powers for the Emergency Release of certain classes of prisoners and we are proactively working alongside Scottish Government and a range of community partners to take forward this work.

7. What efforts are SPS taking to manage the COVID 19 situation?

The safety and wellbeing of those living and working in our prisons is a priority for the Scottish Prison Service and we are working closely with the Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and a range of other partners to manage the unprecedented challenges we are all now facing.

COVID-19 is impacting across all public services, including the prison system and the SPS has been considering all necessary steps which we could take to reduce the risk of the virus spreading. Difficult decisions have had to be made to protect the health of those living and working in our prisons. In order to implement effective social distancing and balance the competing demands of public health and operational stability, the SPS has temporarily suspended the following:

All non-essential work opportunities; communal dining; large group physical activity within prison gyms (although outdoor exercise in smaller numbers is encouraged); and education provision.

8. How are the SPS supporting those in custody?

We are in regular communication with those in our care. Every individual has received at least weekly letters and there have been regular discussions with staff about the impact of COVID-19 in the custodial environment.

Everyone in our care is being provided an additional £2.50 per week of phone credit. Individuals will not be financially disadvantaged as a result of not being able to work. Those

receiving the lowest wage are being provided with an additional £2 per week and the £1 television rental charge is being suspended and is also being added to their personal cash.

In terms of prison wages, only those who undertake essential services to keep the prison running e.g. laundry, catering and cleaning will continue to attend work. Those who are employed in these essential services will receive an additional £10 weekly bonus on top of their current wage.

Whilst all other employment opportunities have been suspended; people in our care will not lose money as a result of being unable to attend work. Those who are unable to work will continue to be paid their full wage. Those who were not previously working will continue to receive a 'cell wage' in line with the Prisoner Earnings and Wages Policy, in addition to an extra £2 per week.

We are working with partners to develop materials which can be used in-cell to promote health and wellbeing.

9. Is there other support available?

Families Outside continue to offer families support remotely.

Many establishment Visitors' Centres also continue to provide support remotely. Please find contact details below.

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>
	Early Years Scotland	<p>EYS supporting children and families through their website and social media links. Log in to see activities ideas to keep your child engaged at home</p> <p>Website: www.earlyyearsscotland.org</p> <p>Facebook: www.facebook.com/earlyyearsscotland</p> <p>Twitter: @earlyyearsscot (www.twitter.com/earlyyearsscot)</p> <p>Instagram: 'earlyyearsscotland' (www.instagram.com/earlyyearsscotland)</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</p> <p>They can contact staff by email sharonsicjg@outlook.com or phone 07518 012314</p> <p>Facebook and Twitter accounts available</p> <p>@Family Help Hub</p> <p>@SICJG1</p>
HMP Polmont Prison Visitors' Centre	CrossReach	<p>Remotely providing information and support via email PolmontVisitorsCentre@crossreach.org.uk</p> <p>and phone between Monday and Friday 10.00am – 4.00pm</p> <p>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 Prison Visitors' Centre	Centrestage	<p>Staff working remotely, can support via telephone between Monday and Friday 9.00 – 5.00 pm on 07778158097</p>
HMP Inverness Prison Visitors' Centre	Action for Children	
HMP Grampian Prison Visitors' Centre	Action for Children	<p>Telephone support on 07877 170244 and Skype support Monday and Friday 9.00 – 5.00 pm Facebook: SeadaFCHH Skype: Seada.rodde@actionforchildren.org.uk</p>
HMP Glenochil Prison Visitors' Centre	Stirling Interfaith Community Justice Group	<p>Staff are working remotely between 10 – 6pm They can contact staff by email sharonsicj@outlook.com or phone 07518 012314 Facebook and Twitter accounts available</p>
HMP Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre	Barnardos	<p>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</p>

		<p>food and utilities, this for obvious reasons is not widely publicised.</p> <p>Phone number is 0131 444 3098</p>
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