



VIRTUAL VISITS

Frequently Asked Questions – 10 June 2020

1. When will virtual visits be in operation?

The first three sites will be operational from 15 June 2020. These sites are HMP & YOI Cornton Vale, HMP & YOI Polmont and HMP Shotts. Family and friends can start to book virtual visits at these sites from 11 June 2020.

There will then be a rolling programme to introduce virtual visits in all other establishments across the prison estate.

2. When will the service become available in all prisons in Scotland?

It is hoped that virtual visits will be available in all sites by the end of June 2020.

3. How do I register for Virtual Visits?

Virtual visits are being delivered in partnership with UniLink, the same company that operates the Email A Prisoner scheme. Visitors need to register with UniLink in order to book a virtual visit. Visitors can register for an Email a Prisoner (EMAP) account at <https://www.emailaprisoner.com/account/register>

Please note

- 1) **Only those visitors who are on the prisoners visit list will be able to book a virtual visit.**
- 2) **You must be over the age of 16 to book a visit**

A video which explains the process can be accessed by clicking on the following link <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

4. I am based overseas – will I be able to register for Video Visits?

Yes, overseas visitors can register via the same web link provided in Q3. Please remember that only visitors who are on the prisoners visit list will be able to book a visit.

5. How much will it cost?

During the initial roll out of the virtual visits, there will be no charge for this service. This will be reviewed in the future when the system is up and running fully in all prisons.

6. Are there any unexpected charges I should be aware of?

You should be aware that to use virtual visits, you will need a device with an internet connection. This will use data for the period of the virtual visit. One 30 min virtual visit will use approximately 500mb of data if you are not connected to Wi-Fi. You should also be aware that this may impact on your data plan allowances depending on the device you use, for example if you are on a Pay-As-You-Go mobile phone package. To reduce the risk of unexpected charges, connect to Wi-Fi if at all possible. If you have any questions about this, please ring the SPS Helpline for support.

7. How long does the registration process take?

Registration is a short process, taking approximately 5 -10 minutes and requires you to input some basic details.

Verification of account should usually be completed within 1 working day.

Please note that you will be required to provide proof of identity. This can be any of the following; Driving licence, Passport, Citizens card or National Entitlement (Saltire) Card. The proof of identity will be photographed and uploaded to the system.

A video which explains the process can be accessed by clicking on the following link <https://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Information/covid19/Information-for-families-and-friends.aspx>

8. How long after registering for Virtual Visits can I have my first visit?

Visits must be booked 3 days in advance. Once verified as an approved visitor, the prison establishment will offer you a visit date and time. Allocation will be on a first come, first served basis and within the entitlements provided.

9. What times will Virtual Visits be available?

Times will be dependent on each establishment but, in general, virtual visits will be available between 0900hrs and 1700hrs. This reflects the current operating times for all establishments. This will be reviewed as we move out of the current COVID-19 restrictions.

10. Is there a limit on the number of Virtual Visits I can have?

Yes, all individuals in custody will have the opportunity for one visit a month. This may be expanded depending on capacity.

11. How will Virtual Visits work?

Visits will be similar to other video conference technology you may have used and should provide a similar experience.

The virtual visit is booked for a set time and you need to be logged in and connected before the allocated Virtual Visit start time. You will then be held in a virtual waiting room until the other person connects to the visit.

Please note that:

- 1) **Only the person who booked the visit should be on screen at the start of the visit in order to confirm identity.**
- 2) **The individual who booked the visit must be on screen at all times.**

12. What equipment do I need?

Any web enabled device with a camera, speaker and microphone is able to access the service. To ensure quality of the virtual visit, it is recommended that you have an internet connection speed of at least 3mbps.

13. Where can I use the service?

The visitor should remain in one location for the duration of the video visit, ideally in their own home. Visits cannot not take place in a public space or outdoors.

14. Is there a limit on the number of users that can participate in a Virtual Visit?

As with physical visits, the maximum number of adults permitted is 3 per video visit. There is no limit on the number of children permitted.

15. How long does a Virtual Visit last?

Video visits will last for 30 minutes.

You need to be logged in and connected before the allocated Virtual Visit start time.

The time of the visit will be shown in a countdown clock on the screen. Five minutes before the end and every following minute thereafter, there will be an alarm sound. The system automatically cuts off at the end of the allocated time.

16. How much mobile data can I expect to use?

It's expected that you will use 500mb of data per 30 min virtual visit if you are not connected to Wi-Fi.

17. What happens if my face is not recognised during the facial recognition checks?

The facial recognition checks will take place several minutes into the visit.

If the face is not recognised a warning message will appear with an outline image, to encourage moving closer and straighter to the screen. The system will continue to check and once satisfied with the correct image, the warning message will disappear.

If several checks do not match the image, the screen will go black and the video feed will not return until several scans have been correctly read by the system.

For this reason, it is important that your tablet or phone is stable and not hand held

18. Can a Virtual Visit be terminated?

Visitors are expected to behave and comply with the same code of conduct as if they were in a prison visit room.

Visits will be monitored both electronically and by staff in the visits area and if any activity breaches expected standards as outlined in the terms and conditions of use, the monitoring officer can terminate the visit which cannot then be restarted.

19. Will the Virtual Visit service continue at the end of COVID-19?

Yes, it is hoped that virtual visits will be popular and there will be a demand to continue the service.