



HEADQUARTERS
One Lochside
1 Lochside Avenue
Edinburgh
EH12 9DJ

Our Ref: HQ26190

15 September 2026

Dear

Thank you for your request dated 26 August 2026 under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A).

For reference, you requested:

Please provide the following information in relation to prisoner telephone use at HMP Edinburgh.

RFI 1: The current tariff for prisoner telephone calls, including:

- * calls to UK mobile numbers;
- * calls to UK landlines;
- * whether calls are charged per second or per minute;
- * whether charges are rounded up;
- * whether there is any connection/setup charge;
- * whether ringing time, unanswered calls, calls reaching voicemail, or very short/"flash" calls attract any charge;
- * whether there are minimum call charges;
- * whether any cheaper evening, weekend or time-of-day tariff applies.

RFI 2: In relation to the commonly described "200 free minutes":

- * what exactly is provided to the prisoner;
- * whether this is genuinely 200 minutes of connected call time or instead a fixed monetary credit converted at the applicable tariff;
- * the monetary value assigned to the allowance;
- * what deductions can be made from it;
- * whether unanswered calls, voicemail, minimum charges, rounding or connection charges reduce that allowance;
- * whether a prisoner can, in practice, make 200 full connected minutes of calls using it;
- * how frequently the allowance is applied;
- * whether unused allowance expires or carries over;
- * whether arrangements differ between remand and sentenced prisoners.

RFI 3: Please provide any internal guidance, tariff sheets, prisoner information sheets or contractual documents currently used to explain telephone charges and the "200 free minutes" allowance to prisoners.

RFI 4: For the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, please provide:

- * the number of complaints, queries or reports from prisoners regarding telephone credit being exhausted earlier than expected;
- * complaints about unexpected call charges;
- * complaints regarding discrepancies between expected and actual available minutes;
- * any audits, reconciliations or investigations undertaken in relation to the calculation of the 200-minute allowance.

RFI 5: Please confirm the current maximum weekly amount which a remand prisoner at HMP Edinburgh may spend on:

- * telephone credit;
- * canteen/private cash expenditure generally;
- * and whether the whole available weekly allowance may be allocated to telephone credit if the prisoner chooses.

Please also provide the equivalent figures for sentenced prisoners and identify any differences based on privilege level or prisoner status.

RFI 6: Please provide the policy or guidance governing additional/discretionary/emergency telephone credit, including:

- * the circumstances in which additional credit may be granted;
- * who has authority to approve it;
- * the maximum or usual amount;
- * whether it must later be repaid or deducted;
- * whether it is available to remand prisoners;
- * whether family serious illness, bereavement, compassionate circumstances or urgent legal contact are recognised grounds.

For 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, please also provide the number of requests for additional/discretionary telephone credit at HMP Edinburgh, and how many were approved and refused, together with the total value granted if held.

RFI 7: Please explain what happens where there is a telephone-system fault, unusually short/disconnected call, erroneous charge or other technical issue:

- * whether credit is automatically restored;
- * how a prisoner requests reimbursement;
- * and how many reimbursements or credit corrections were made at HMP Edinburgh during the above period.

RFI 8: Please identify:

- * the current provider/operator of the prisoner telephone system at HMP Edinburgh;
- * the date the current tariff came into effect;
- * and, where disclosable, the relevant contract or service specification governing call charging.

If some of the information is held centrally by SPS rather than specifically by HMP Edinburgh, please provide the centrally held information and make clear where it applies across the estate rather than only to HMP Edinburgh.

If any part of the request would exceed the statutory cost limit, please provide the remaining information and advise how the affected part could be narrowed rather than refusing the request in full.

We have now completed our search for the information you requested and our responses are shown below at each indented bullet point.

Please note, where our response below states there is no data, this is in accordance with section 17(1) of FOISA.

RFI 1 Response:

The current tariff for prisoner telephone calls, including:

- calls to UK mobile numbers;
 - Calls are charged at 5 pence per minute.
- calls to UK landlines;
 - Calls are charged at 5 pence per minute.
- whether calls are charged per second or per minute;
 - Calls are charged per second.
- whether charges are rounded up;
 - Calls are rounded to the full second.
- whether there is any connection/setup charge;
 - There is no connection charge.
- whether ringing time, unanswered calls, calls reaching voicemail, or very short/"flash" calls attract any charge;
 - Any call that is connected will be charged whether that is connected to a voicemail service or not.
- whether there are minimum call charges;
 - There are no minimum call charges.
- whether any cheaper evening, weekend or time-of-day tariff applies.
 - There are no cheaper tariffs.

RFI 2 Response:

In relation to the commonly described "200 free minutes":

- what exactly is provided to the prisoner;
 - The individual in our care is provided with 200mins that can be used to call UK Mobiles and Landlines.
- whether this is genuinely 200 minutes of connected call time or instead a fixed monetary credit converted at the applicable tariff;
 - It is 200 minutes for calls to UK mobiles/landlines.
- the monetary value assigned to the allowance;
 - There is no monetary value.
- what deductions can be made from it;
 - The deductions from the 200mins are made in seconds when calls are made by individuals in our care.
- whether unanswered calls, voicemail, minimum charges, rounding or connection charges reduce that allowance;
 - Only calls that connect will deduct from the 200 mins.
- whether a prisoner can, in practice, make 200 full connected minutes of calls using it;
 - Yes, calls are inclusive of the preannouncement message.
- how frequently the allowance is applied;
 - The allowance is applied on the 1st of every month.
- whether unused allowance expires or carries over;
 - Unused allowance expires and is not carried over.
- whether arrangements differ between remand and sentenced prisoners.
 - There is no difference made between untried and convicted.

RFI 3 Response:

- Please provide any internal guidance, tariff sheets, prisoner information sheets or contractual documents currently used to explain telephone charges and the “200 free minutes” allowance to prisoners.
 - Attached to this response are 2 x notices with regards to the 200 free minutes.

Data in relation to third party names has been redacted from these notices under Section 38 (1)(b) of FOISA – personal data relating to a third party. Releasing this data would contravene Section 45(4)(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 – protect the rights and freedoms of others.

RFI 4 Response:

For the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, please provide:

- the number of complaints, queries or reports from prisoners regarding telephone credit being exhausted earlier than expected;
 - There is one complaint of this nature.
- complaints about unexpected call charges;
 - There are zero complaints of this nature.
- complaints regarding discrepancies between expected and actual available minutes;
 - There are zero complaints of this nature.
- any audits, reconciliations or investigations undertaken in relation to the calculation of the 200-minute allowance.
 - Unfortunately, this information is not held within the specified date range; however, the attached information explains how the SPS arrived at the 200-minute allowance.

RFI 5 Response:

Please confirm the current maximum weekly amount which a remand prisoner at HMP Edinburgh may spend on:

- telephone credit;
 - Those on remand £20 per canteen cycle (twice per week) from their private cash if they have the funds plus any wages if they choose to work.
- canteen/private cash expenditure generally;
 - Those on remand £20 per canteen cycle (twice per week) from their private cash if they have the funds plus any wages if choose to work.
- and whether the whole available weekly allowance may be allocated to telephone credit if the prisoner chooses.
 - If the individual in our care chooses the whole allowance can be used for telephone credit.
- Please also provide the equivalent figures for sentenced prisoners and identify any differences based on privilege level or prisoner status.
 - Convicted individuals is £20 per canteen cycle (once per week) from their private cash if they have the funds plus any wages they get for working.

RFI 6 Response:

Please provide the policy or guidance governing additional/discretionary/emergency telephone credit, including.

- the circumstances in which additional credit may be granted;
 - There is no policy for emergency telephone credit. The SPS has long used the Canteen sheet as the vehicle for PIN Phone credit top-ups. This is a pre-existing process and permits, at least, a once weekly opportunity to top up credit from available Wage balances. Other mechanisms exist to permit additional access where personal circumstances suddenly change and additional external contact with friends/family is supportive and

beneficial. Individuals would go on request and give a reason for the need for additional phone credit. The most common reasons are a family emergency or the need to speak to a legal advisor

- who has authority to approve it;
 - First Line Managers have the authority to approve requests.
- the maximum or usual amount;
 - The maximum or usual amount is £5.
- whether it must later be repaid or deducted;
 - No request for additional phone credit will be approved if the requester has insufficient funds in their account. If approved the money will be immediately deducted from the requesters account.
- whether it is available to remand prisoners
 - Those on remand can also request for additional money on their phone account as long as they have the funds in their account.
- whether family serious illness, bereavement, compassionate circumstances or urgent legal contact are recognised grounds.
 - All the above are considered reasonable grounds for requesting additional phone credit.
- For 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, please also provide the number of requests for additional/discretionary telephone credit at HMP Edinburgh, and how many were approved and refused, together with the total value granted if held.
 - There were 1339 requests for additional phone credit from 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 of which 86 were rejected. The monetary value for the approved requests is not retained by the SPS.

RFI 7 Response:

- Please explain what happens where there is a telephone-system fault, unusually short/disconnected call, erroneous charge or other technical issue:
 - All faults should be raised with staff who in turn will raise an incident report.
- whether credit is automatically restored;
 - If through investigation it is found that an individual has had credit removed due to a fault or other issue it will be reinstated
- how a prisoner requests reimbursement;
 - Individuals would raise the issue with staff who would then raise an incident for investigation
- and how many reimbursements or credit corrections were made at HMP Edinburgh during the above period.
 - It is not possible to say how many reimbursements/credit corrections have been made. This information is not held.

RFI 8 Response:

Please identify:

- the current provider/operator of the prisoner telephone system at HMP Edinburgh;
 - Unify supply the PIN phone system for the whole of the SPS Estate.
- the date the current tariff came into effect;
 - The current UK Tariff came into effect in 2023.
- and, where disclosable, the relevant contract or service specification governing call charging.
 - While we endeavour to provide information whenever possible, an exemption under section 33(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) applies to the information you have requested. Section 33(1)(b) applies where disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice substantially the commercial interests of any person, including a Scottish public authority.

In this case, disclosure of the prices paid by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to telephony suppliers would, or would be likely to, prejudice substantially the commercial interests of both SPS and the relevant suppliers.

Disclosure would reveal commercially sensitive supplier pricing information which could prejudice the suppliers' competitive position and adversely affect SPS's ability to obtain best value in future procurement exercises.

Section 33(1)(b) is subject to the public interest test. While SPS recognises the public interest in transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to the expenditure of public funds, it is considered that there is a greater public interest in protecting legitimate commercial interests and ensuring that SPS is able to secure best value through fair and effective procurement arrangements.

On balance, SPS has concluded that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Accordingly, the information has been withheld under section 33(1)(b) of FOISA.

- If some of the information is held centrally by SPS rather than specifically by HMP Edinburgh, please provide the centrally held information and make clear where it applies across the estate rather than only to HMP Edinburgh.
 - All information provided in relation to PIN Phones is estate wide. There is no individual system for HMP Edinburgh.

This concludes our response to your request.

If you are unhappy with this response to your request, you may ask us to conduct an internal review, by writing to The Chief Executive, One Lochside, 1 Lochside Avenue, Edinburgh, EH12 9DJ. Your request should explain why you wish a review to be conducted and should be made within forty working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within twenty working days of receipt. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

SPS Operational Adviser

PIN PHONE CALL RATES

From **1st August 2023**, the cost for Prisoners making calls from SPS Public Sector establishments using Prisoner PIN phones will be as follows.

Calls will be charged according to the following call tariff:

Pence per Minute for calls to:	Peak (Mon to Fri)	Off-Peak (Mon to Fri)	Weekend
UK Landlines (01, 02, & 03)	5.0p Flat Rate		
UK Mobiles	5.0p Flat Rate		

Please note:

- There is no connection charge to UK Mobile or UK landlines.
- Calls are charged per second and rounded up to the nearest penny.
- Calls to numbers other than UK 01, 02, 03 and UK mobiles may be charged at rates different to those above. This includes International numbers and 0845 numbers - further details for these numbers are available on request.

INFORMATION FOR PRISONERS

IN-CELL TELEPHONY

28 JUNE

I am writing to update you on the work underway to introduce hard-wired telephones to HMP Edinburgh.

This system will allow you to call family, friends, and other services, from the privacy of your own room. Work has progressed well, and we have already installed the cabling to support this.

As you know, we are also withdrawing the Scottish Prison Service-issued mobile phones from use.

They were provided to you during the pandemic, along with a temporary offer of 300 free minutes of calls, to help you stay in touch with friends and family when in person visits were not possible.

Thankfully, those in person visits returned last year. However, we have not forgotten the lessons of the pandemic, nor the value of you having your own phone and some free calls.

That is why we are not only introducing in-cell telephony, but also providing 200 free minutes of calls, with any additional charged at 5p per minute.

We found that less than half of the free minutes available during the pandemic were taken up, so believe this strikes the right balance between supporting family contact, while not wasting money that is needed for other prison services.

We have planned to have in-cell telephony in place ahead of the removal of prison-issued phones and are on course to deliver this at HMP Edinburgh. We will keep you updated if this changes in any way.

During this time, you will still have access to hall PIN phones, as was the case prior to the pandemic.

In the long term, the in-cell telephony system will support our ambitions for in-cell technology, further supporting family contact and education, and giving you greater control over your own lives.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When will I no longer have access to a mobile phone?

All prison-issued mobiles will stop working by 31 July.

When will I have access to an in-cell 'hard wired' phone?

It is expected that in-cell telephones will be fully installed at HMP Edinburgh by 28 July.

Will I still get free calls?

Free calls were provided to help you maintain family contact during a time when other means of contact were restricted, as a result of the Covid pandemic. However, less than half of these minutes were used. We are now providing 200 free minutes on the in-cell phones.

How much will this cost me?

All calls made above your 200 free minutes will be charged at 5p per minute.

When will I be able to make calls?

Access to the in-cell telephones will be available 24 hours a day.

How many people will I be able to call?

There will be no change to the current process. You will still have up to 20 phone numbers on your list.

Will calls be monitored?

Yes, calls will continue to be recorded and can be monitored.

I share a cell, will I have my own telephone?

No. There will be one telephone placed within each room regardless of the number of occupants.

FOISA Section 38(1)(b)

Interim Director of Operations