

Open Estate and Home Leave

What is the Open Estate?

The open estate refers to prisons in Scotland where those in custody live in 'open conditions'. It is the top level in the progression process.

The open estate is designed to support people in custody better prepare for a successful return to their communities, by giving them increased personal responsibility and freedoms.

For those serving **long-term** or **life sentences**, it helps build confidence, develop key skills and provides evidence that they can handle more independence safely.

For those serving **short-term sentences**, it provides a chance to serve part of their sentence in a less secure environment. It helps them stay connected with their family and community before they are released.

Which establishments are in the Open Estate?



HMP Castle Huntly - Longforgan, near Dundee (for men)

The Bella Centre - Hilltown, Dundee (for women)

The Lillas Centre - Maryhill, Glasgow (for women)

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Who is eligible to be considered for the Open Estate?

Those in custody who:

- Have a **Low** supervision status
- Have no outstanding criminal charges
- Have no Orderly Room award greater than a caution in the last three months
- Are not subject to a deportation order, **OR**, if they are subject to an order, have already been granted temporary release within the last three months, under Rule 134
- Integrated Case Management (ICM) can evidence no identified risks/needs that couldn't be managed at National Top End (NTE)
- Can evidence no drug taking within last three months (one negative test)
- Are serving a short term sentence of more than 12 months and have served three months of that sentence
- Are serving a long-term sentence and have served six months in closed conditions, and are within two years of their Parole Qualifying Date
- Are serving an indeterminate sentence, and are within four years of the expiry of the punishment part of their sentence (although the normal progression pathway is via National Top End)
- Women serving short-term (no less than three months to serve), long-term and indeterminate sentences, can also be considered for potential transfer to a Community Custody Unit (CCU) - [the Bella Centre](#) or [the Liliias Centre](#).

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Who makes the decision?

Establishments have a multi-disciplinary Risk Management Team (RMT) who consider all relevant information in reaching a decision about your loved one's suitability for the open estate and community access. They also consider the range of supports they may need in the community.

Information they use to make this decision can include:

- Outcome of Formal Risk Assessments
- RMT Meeting Minutes
- Parole Recommendations
- ICM Case Conference minutes
- Home Leave Report
- Prison Based Social Work information
- Community Social Work information
- Addictions Services information
- Health Care/Mental Health information
- Employability information
- Personal Officer information

What else is considered?

The RMT carefully assess risks and issues related to your loved ones return to the community, including but not limited to, the following:

- Your loved ones safety
- Domestic abuse concerns
- Child protection concerns
- Addiction and substance use concerns
- Index offence factors
- Previous offending history
- Victims
- Community concerns
- Media coverage and risk to your loved one

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What is available to those in the Open Estate?

There are a wide range of opportunities available in the Open Estate:

- Home Leave (opportunities to return home for a few days)
- Community work placements
- Virtual and in-person visits in relaxed surroundings
- Community engagement projects

These opportunities are aimed at helping your loved one successfully manage their transition from custody to the community.

What are licence conditions?

The RMT in the open estate will detail the licence conditions under which your loved one will access the community. These are the rules they must follow when away from the prison.

This will include information about any meetings scheduled during home leave, which your loved one would be expected to attend.



Your loved one will be given a significant degree of trust during community access and will be expected to exercise this responsibly. If they don't, their community access can be removed, and they may be returned to closed conditions.

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Community Custody Units (CCUs)

The CCUs offer a unique type of accommodation for women in custody, consisting of closed, National Top End and Open Estate facilities. The Bella Centre is located in Hilltown, Dundee, and the Lilius Centre is located in Maryhill, Glasgow.

The progression criteria for women working towards community access is the same as those applied to men progressing to the Open Estate at Castle Huntly or to another National Top End facility.

Women can initially transfer to a CCU under closed conditions, where they do not have community access. Once there, they can progress and achieve greater levels of community access supported by their Personal Officer, Health Care professionals and other third sector partners.

The CCUs help women gain confidence by giving them chances to practice everyday skills, planning for and managing their own food budget, cooking their own meals, and living in small shared homes. There are also shared community spaces within the units, which often host events and activities.

The goal is to create and maintain a strong support network of friends, family, and professionals to help them successfully return to the community.



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What happens once my loved one is at the Open Estate?

Before your loved one can access placements, home leave, or other community activities, there will be another assessment period.

The open estate usually review your loved one for community access after two weeks. If approved, access will start 28 days after their initial transfer date.

If any risks are identified, the assessment period might be extended to make sure these can be managed when your loved one returns to the community.

Your loved one will be told about the reasons for the delay and how long it might take.

What if my loved one has no address to go to?

If your loved one doesn't have an address they will still be considered for the Open Estate if the standard criteria is met. However, there is a shortage of supported housing, which means arranging home leave can be challenging.

If this is the case for your loved one, before they progress, the closed establishment will request a home leave report to explore the circumstances.

Can I still visit my loved one while they're waiting for a decision about community access?

Yes, visiting details are available on the [SPS website](#).