

HELP & ADVICE FOR THOSE VISITING A PRISON IN NORTHERN IRELAND



Family Support Officers and Visitors' Centre Staff

Family Support Officers and the staff at each Visitor's Welcome Centre are available to offer support and guidance to family and friends. They can also direct you to additional support through outside agencies. Please note that Family Support Officers are NIPS staff and Visitors' Centre staff are employed by PeoplePlus NI.

How do I book a visit?

If you are visiting someone who has been newly committed to prison you may be able to have a first visit without pre-booking. These places are, however, limited so you must telephone the Visits Booking Office before you travel.

For all other visits you will need to use the reference number (which the prisoner/student will give to you for each visit) to make a booking by telephone - please see numbers of booking offices at the back of this booklet.

The details of all people including the names, addresses and ages of children intending to visit should be given when booking a visit.

If you have any special requirements including wheelchair access you **must** tell the staff when booking your visit or contact the Family Support Officer.

What identification do I need to make a visit?

All visitors aged 18 and over will, by their third visit, have to provide photographic evidence of their identity; be photographed for record purposes and have their fingers scanned to enrol them on the system. Acceptable photographic ID includes

- driving licence
- passport
- electoral identity card
- senior citizen's smart pass
- citizen's card

You should allow a little extra time on arrival to your first visit to be registered on the system. After being registered, your identity will be checked before you enter the visits room and again when you are leaving the room. This simply involves your finger scan being checked by staff and only takes a few seconds.

With your agreement your photograph and finger scan will remain on the system for future visits and as a result you will not have to bring photographic identification every time you visit. All records are stored and protected in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be deleted 3 months after your last visit.

Children aged between 16 and 18 may be permitted to have visits unaccompanied by an adult provided there are no circumstances to indicate that it would not be in their interests. The written consent of their parent/guardian will be required. These children will also have to provide photographic ID, be photographed and have their fingers scanned to enrol them on the system.

Will I be searched?

All visitors should expect to be searched. Children need to be accompanied by an adult. Anybody refusing to be searched will not be allowed to see the prisoner/student. The senior officer on duty has the authority to terminate a visit if the prisoner/student or visitor fails to comply with prison rules regarding visits.

Before entering the visits room all visitors undergo a rub down search and must pass a dog that is fully trained to detect drugs. The dog is on a lead and does not come into contact with the visitor but detects by scent. The dog will indicate to the handler when a visitor may be carrying drugs or has been in close recent contact with drugs. When a dog makes a positive indication, in the interests of health and safety, the visitor will be offered either a closed visit (in a location that prevents physical contact) or they can choose not to take the visit. If a closed visit facility is not available the visitor may reschedule their visit.

How many people can come for a visit?

Normally two adults, together with three accompanying children will be allowed at each visit. Depending on the space available the prison may be able to accommodate larger families who wish to visit together. It is, however, essential that you agree the numbers with the prison before you travel.

What items can I bring to a visit?

Visitors must leave their personal belongings in the specially provided lockers in each prison but each visiting party is permitted to bring a limited amount of cash (coins only) through to the visiting room for the purpose of purchasing snacks.

What items can I bring in for my relative/friend?

Prisoners in Northern Ireland are permitted to wear their own clothes. If they do not wish to supply any or all of their own clothing certain items can be provided by the prison.

Clothing parcels may be left at Visits Reception. Prisoners/students are limited to what clothing they are permitted to wear and as all laundry is carried out within the prison all clothing must be machine washable. Please check with the prison concerned regarding the current list of accepted items.

Visitors can leave in paperback books during Visits Reception opening times.

Can I post items to my relative/friend?

There is no restriction on the number of letters that can be sent in each week to the prisons. These should be addressed as below:

Prisoner's name and number

Residential location (if known)

Prison address (see back of this booklet)

The following items **should not** be posted to the prisoner:

- ❖ Padded/musical/very large cards
- ❖ Laminated items
- ❖ Any food items
- ❖ CDs or DVDs, etc.
- ❖ Clothing
- ❖ Money/cheques/postal or money orders

Prisoners' Personal Cash (IPC)

Money for prisoners/students can only be left at Visits Reception by a domestic visitor to that particular prisoner/student – no money will be accepted by post without the written permission of the Governor. The £500 maximum level of the account cannot be exceeded. Staff in Visits Reception can check the balance of all accounts.

Prisoners/students will not be allowed to pass any money out of the prison to any person without the written permission of the Governor.

A prisoner/student can spend the money in his IPC account in various ways including:-

Telephone – each prisoner/student is issued with a Personal Identification Number (PIN) which will allow them to dial any one of their 20 pre-stored numbers. A prisoner/student cannot receive incoming calls.

Tuckshop – a system which allows prisoners/students to purchase groceries, sweets, toiletries, cigarettes, radios, etc

Spending limits are set for each sentenced prisoner/student depending on their regime level. Remand prisoners/students have no spending limit and can spend as much as they have in their IPC account.

PREPS

The Progressive Regime and Earned Privileges Scheme (PREPS) operates throughout all prisons in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the scheme is to recognise

and reward prisoner/student's efforts and commitment at each regime level both financially and through a range of incentives and privileges which will be made available at each prison establishment.

Prisoner Development Unit

The Prisoner Development model is a multi-agency approach focused on the reduction of risk and the rehabilitation of those committed to the care of the Northern Ireland Prison Service. Using structured Personal Development Plans prisoners/students are encouraged and supported to use their time constructively to address the risk they pose to the community and to develop the skills necessary to ensure a safe transition into the community at the end of their sentence.

Within each establishment there is a Prisoner Development Unit (PDU) which works in conjunction with other prison departments and partner agencies to support, challenge and motivate prisoners/students to help them prepare for their return to the community.

Child Centred Visits (CCVs)

Child Centred Visits (CCVs) create special opportunities for parents to bond with their children. Applications from eligible prisoners/students will be assessed on individual merit. Please contact the Family Support Officer for further details.

Prison Visits Scheme - Contribution towards Travel Costs

In an endeavour to promote family ties the Northern Ireland Prison Service will, in certain circumstances, make a contribution towards the cost of travel expenses for those travelling to a prison to visit a close relative or partner. The Scheme is for those on low income. Payments will be made by the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) in Birmingham.

Further information on this Scheme can be obtained from the APVU – please see contact details at the back of this booklet.

Is there transport available to take me to the prison?

NIACRO operates a transport service to each of the prisons from various locations in Northern Ireland. Please contact the freephone number at the back of this booklet for further details and to make a booking.

What if I am concerned for my relative/friend in prison?

If you are concerned about the well-being of a relative or friend in prison, you should provide the prison with information so that staff can pay particular attention to that individual. This may include issues such as threats of suicide or self harm, depression, anxiety problems, medication requirements, drug or alcohol problems or bullying. Should you wish to pass on any such information you should telephone the prison on the number at the back of this booklet and ask to speak to the senior manager on duty or talk to a member of staff at the Visitors' Welcome Centre.

How do I make a complaint?

A visitor to one of our prisons may make a complaint about:

- his or her treatment by any person employed in NIPS;
- the facilities available to him or her at the prison; and
- the cleanliness and adequacy of prison premises.

A booklet in which to make the complaint is available in the Visitors' Welcome Centre or Visits Reception Complex or from Family Support Officers. A short leaflet explaining the procedure is also available at these locations and members of staff from the prison or the Visitors' Welcome Centre are available to provide any help required.

If anybody remains unhappy after raising a complaint with the relevant prison. they can ask the Prisoner Ombudsman to investigate by calling the freephone number at the back of this booklet (calls will not be recorded).

Who can I speak to if I have any other difficulties?

Visitors' Welcome Centre staff and Family Links staff will be able to point you to the appropriate place to get advice on issues such as benefits, housing and family support.

How do I help my child cope with having a relative in prison?

If you are concerned about how your child is coping or would like information about what to tell them about prison please contact Barnardos Parenting Matters at the number at the back of this booklet.

Useful contact details

Prison Service Headquarters
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SU

028 9052 5065

Maghaberry Prison
Old Road
Ballinderry Upper
Lisburn
BT28 2NF

028 9261 1888

Maghaberry Family Support Officer
Maghaberry Visitors' Welcome Centre
Maghaberry Visits Booking
Maghaberry Probation Department

028 9261 6067

028 9261 1213

0300 200 7866

028 9261 6772

Magilligan Prison
Point Road
Limavady
BT49 0LR

028 7776 3311

Magilligan Family Support Officer
Magilligan Visitors' Welcome Centre
Magilligan Visits Booking
Magilligan Probation Department

028 7772 0516

028 7775 0235

0300 200 7866

028 7775 0434

Hydebank Wood College & Women's Prison
Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8NA

028 9025 3666

Hydebank Wood Family Support Officer
Hydebank Wood Visitor's Welcome Centre
Hydebank Wood Visits Booking
Hydebank Wood Probation Department

028 9049 4331

028 9025 3849

028 9025 3852

028 9049 4100

PeoplePlus NI

028 95213219

NIACRO Family Links

028 9032 0157

NIACRO Transport Freephone
(Monday & Thursday 10.00am to 1.00pm)

0800 169 2207

Barnardos Parenting Matters

028 9064 4335

Prisoner Ombudsman

0800 783 6317

Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU)

0300 063 2100

PO Box 2152

(closed bank holidays)

Birmingham

B15 1SD

E-mail: assisted.prison.visits@noms.gsi.gov.uk

