

Coming Home

families
outside

supporting
families affected
by imprisonment



Preparing for release will be a different experience for everyone; some families will be excited to have their family member back at home, and some families may be worried.

However you and your family are feeling, this booklet has been developed to give you as much practical information as possible and to encourage you to think and talk about release so you feel prepared.

Contents

- The Criminal Justice System prior to and after release page 2
- Home Detention Curfew page 4
- Home Leave page 6
- Support Following Release page 8
- Relationships & Communication page 10
- Children: Parenting together after release page 12
- Money, benefits, and employment page 14
- Housing page 16
- Making a plan page 18
- Licence Conditions page 20



The Criminal Justice System prior to and after release

As your family member approaches release, there are a number of ways they can find support. For instance, if your loved one is serving a short-term sentence of less than 4 years, they will have an opportunity to engage in a voluntary throughcare service.

If your family member was sentenced to more than 4 years, he or she will be assigned a Criminal Justice Social Worker who will support them following their release until they have completed their licence conditions ([see page 20 for more information](#)). You can contact this person for support at any time throughout your family member's sentence.

"Time might stop for you in here, but out there everything goes on."



Early in the sentence, Integrated Case Management (ICM) case conferences are meetings that bring external agencies and the prison staff together to give people in prison help and support to deal with any issues so that they are less likely to reoffend when they are released. You can be involved with these, with your family member's permission.

There are specific processes surrounding the release of people who have been convicted of a sexual offence, and they will usually have specific licence conditions. The Families Outside booklet, "*Picking Up the Pieces*", has more information.

"When you get out, you walk towards a door and you just stop and stand. I was at my Granny's and I was waiting for her to open the door, she said 'What are you waiting for? The door's open!' It's weird."

Will the media report their release?

When someone gets out of prison, there may be renewed media interest in their case, so it is best to be prepared for this. It can be hard for you to read stories about your family member in the media, especially if the story is sensationalised or only partly true. Some people take a break from social media while there is a lot of press interest in their family member. It's a good idea to review your privacy settings and make sure they are set at the level you are happy with.

If you are approached by the press for a comment about a specific case, our advice would be to say "I have nothing to say".

Home Detention Curfew (HDC)

What is HDC?

Home Detention Curfew (HDC) (release with electronic monitoring, sometimes called a 'tag') allows certain people to serve the last part of their sentence at home, or another approved address, for a maximum period of 6 months. Not everyone will be eligible for HDC. An electronic tag is fitted around the ankle of the person leaving prison, and a home monitoring unit (HMU) is installed at their address. This monitors where they are and sends a signal if they are not in the home at certain times. It does not record what people are saying or doing.

Will anyone talk to me about HDC before my family member is released?

Before a decision is made by the prison about whether someone is to be released on HDC, a member of the Criminal Justice Social Work team will contact the family living in the home to assess the address and home situation. (This is a risk assessment for the whole family and not about the physical appearance of your home). They will talk to you about HDC and how it might affect the other people living at the address. You can raise any questions you have about HDC when they contact you.

What if my family member won't be living with me when they are out on HDC?

Your family member does not have to use your address for HDC. They could apply for HDC with another close friend or family member, or within supported accommodation if this has been arranged. Any address they provide will be checked to make sure its suitable before it is approved.



What will it be like if my family member comes home on HDC?

Although people on HDC are allowed to come home, their freedom will be restricted. Having a family member living at home on HDC can affect the people living with them, though most families say that it is much less disruptive than having a family member in prison. The tag can restrict the activities your family member is able to do.

“You don’t have the chance to be a real partner. You constantly have to try to set rules and see that they are observed. [...] I have to be strong for him, have a hold on him. He wants that too, but it makes it really hard for me.”

Will it be my job to make sure that they stick to the rules?

Anyone on HDC will be on a ‘curfew’ and not allowed out from the address between certain times. It is their responsibility to make sure that they are where they are meant to be at those times, otherwise they can be recalled to prison.

Research into electronic monitoring has found that families tend to restrict their own movements when someone in the house is on a tag, with the result that they too become socially isolated. Others have contacted us with worries about people who come to the house who are unwelcome. Be sure to ask for help from your family member’s social worker or Families Outside if you’re struggling with this.

The Families Outside Factsheet on HDC offers more information on HDC, how people in prison can apply and the eligibility criteria.

Home Leave

What is Home Leave?

Home Leave gives a person who is still serving their prison sentence an opportunity to spend short periods of time at home and in their community. Home Leave is designed to help prepare people for their eventual release. It can help families maintain contact and adjust to having their loved one back in the family home for short periods. It helps people in prison to adjust to life outside and allows the prison to assess their ability to manage outside prison.

Are all prisoners eligible for Home Leave?

No – only people serving their sentence in ‘open conditions’ such as an Open Estate Prison are eligible for Home Leave.

Whether they are eligible to transfer to open conditions will be assessed on a case by case basis. Once they are transferred to open conditions, a multi-agency Risk Management Team (RMT) meeting will be held within 28 days to assess their eligibility for Home Leave and decide:

- If they can get home leave or whether they will be restricted to the prison grounds.
- How often they can have home leave and whether this needs to be staged.
- How long they can leave prison for.
- Where they can travel.

Can I visit whilst waiting on a decision being made about Home Leave?

Once they are transferred to open conditions, you can still visit your family member in prison while they are waiting for a decision on Home Leave.



What happens when they are on Home Leave?

While they are on Home Leave, your family member will be able to come home and take part in day-to-day activities. They may be able to access a community work placement. You may find it easier to talk and make a plan for the future following their release in your own home, rather than during a formal prison visit.

Your family member's freedom will still be restricted, and they will have licence conditions and appointments to keep. Your family member will be informed of these conditions and any other requirements. If they don't stick to these conditions, they may be 'recalled' to a closed prison or asked to hand themselves in to police custody.

It is your family member's responsibility to stick to their licence conditions, though many families feel under pressure to make sure their family member follows the rules. If you're concerned about anything whilst your loved one is on Home Leave, you can contact the prison for more information, or **Families Outside** on **0800 254 0088**.

Will they get financial support while they are on Home Leave?

While they are on Home Leave, your family member is still serving their prison sentence, so they are not entitled to welfare benefits. The prison will issue them with a small grant and cover their travel costs between the prison and their home (or other accommodation). The prison may also be able to cover expenses if they need to travel to appointments. Having them at home even for short periods can put financial pressure on the family, so you may be able to apply for a Community Care Grant from your local authority.

What if I don't want them to live with me whilst on Home Leave?

Having your family member return to the family home may not always be positive. If you do not want them to stay with you, then different housing options, such as supported accommodation, can be considered. You will have an opportunity to discuss this in confidence with Criminal Justice Social Work before the Risk Management Team makes a decision on Home Leave.

Support following release

It is likely that your family member will need patience and understanding from you as they adjust to life outside. Many people will need support beyond what their family can provide to address the issues which led to them going to prison.

Supporting someone with complex needs can take a lot out of you emotionally as well as physically and financially. It is important that you take care of your own wellbeing. Be kind to yourself. It can help to talk to someone you trust, or to a specialist helpline, about what is going on.

“When you get out, the family ask ‘How long you out for?’ No one intends to come back, but it happens.”

Will my family member get support from the Prison Service to adjust to life outside?

The Scottish Prison Service offers a throughcare support service to people released following a sentence of less than four years. This service can work with your family member to prepare them for release and settle them back into the community. Your family member doesn't have to take up this service. If they want this service, then a Throughcare Support Officer (TSO) will work with them to access housing, health services, and welfare benefits.

SPS Throughcare Service is temporarily suspended from September 2019.

In most prisons, independent voluntary sector organisations offer a throughcare service. To find out which throughcare support services may be available to your family member, contact the prison, or **Families Outside** on **0800 254 0088**.

“Because you're so worried about everything, throughcare explained everything and took me to every appointment – they helped me reconstruct myself back into the community”



“My son’s been in and out of prison for 20-odd years, and it just takes one word when we’re talking to set us off. We could talk as a family when they (TSO) were there, because if it looked like it could escalate they would deal with things. They were very positive, and it rubbed off on us.”

What happens if they require additional support for physical and mental health or addictions?

Transition from prison can be stressful for your loved one. It’s important that they register with a GP as soon as possible after released. If you have any concerns about their mental health or they are having suicidal thoughts, contact their GP or a specialist helpline such as ***Samaritans 116 123***, or ***Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87***. Such support may be helpful to you, too: having a family member in prison isn’t easy, so be sure to be mindful of your own health and wellbeing.

If your family member has been managed under ***Talk To Me (TTM)***, a suicide prevention programme in prison, then their plan will be transferred with them in to the community.

If your family member has been detoxing from drug use in prison, their tolerance level will be lower that it was and therefore they can be at higher risk of overdose. Naloxone is a medication that is often used to block the effects of opioids, especially in overdose.

For information on getting a Naloxone kit and training, contact ***Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs*** on ***08080 101011***.

“Before I would have assumed I was going back to sell drugs; this time I need to put together a plan.”

Relationships and Communication

"See when you do go out, you feel a bit weird... I've been away for four years and they've moved on with their lives."

What will it be like between us when my family member is released from prison?

Every family is unique, and every relationship is different. The period around release will mean big changes for everyone, and some families can find that hard. Your expectations of each other need to be realistic. Adjusting to family life together again is likely to require effort. You both need to communicate about how you are feeling and what you expect. Their re-entry in to the family will be easier if you have planned for this together and are both working towards the same goals.

"As a grown married woman, I found it was difficult knowing that my mum wanted to know my every move, the continuous phone calls and the panic when I didn't answer, eventually I had to say to her."



How can we talk about the things that matter while they are in prison?

When you can only see each other in a prison visits room, talking about your personal feelings can be hard. You might want to support and comfort your family member through their time in prison and so want to avoid arguing. If, on your prison visits, you are able to try and talk honestly about things that are important to you, it will make it easier to adjust after release. You could think about sending a letter or accessing the [Email a Prisoner scheme \(www.emailaprisoner.com\)](http://www.emailaprisoner.com) if you would find that easier.

The thought of having sex with my partner again feels a bit strange. Is that normal?

For some couples, resuming a sexual relationship can feel strange. Even strong, loving couples might need time to rebuild trust and feel comfortable with each other. There is no right or wrong way to feel about it. It is important that both partners are prepared to be patient, to talk to one another about how they are feeling, and to accept one another. Neither of you should feel pressure to have sex if you don't want to.

If you are concerned about your relationship post-release, or specifically worried about domestic violence or other forms of abuse, please contact:

Relationships Scotland – 0345 119 2020

Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) – 0131 475 2493

Scottish Women's Aid – 0800 027 1234

Children: Parenting together after release

How will it affect our children when my partner comes home again?

If a parent has been away in prison, having them home can be a big adjustment for the children. Children will have grown older and may be used to having freedoms and responsibilities they did not have when their parent went away to prison. Children may have strong feelings for, or against, their parent's return into the family home, and it is important that they have an opportunity to voice how they feel and have their feelings recognised.

How can I support my children through these changes?

If children have opportunities to talk to and visit their parent/family member while they are in prison, this can help to keep their relationship strong so living together again will be easier. Prisons in Scotland offer special Children's Visits to allow parents in prison to spend time with their children in a more relaxed environment. Most prisons also offer Family Days and events. The Families Outside information sheet on visiting a Scottish prison with your child offers more information.

If you can talk to your child's school about what is going on, they will be well placed to work with you to support your child.

What if we have children but we're not together anymore?

If you have taken the decision not to be a couple any longer, then tensions surrounding this decision and the underlying problems which led to you breaking up can make things harder following release. Relationships Scotland offers a useful guide to what children say they feel like and want if their parents separate. They also offer counselling sessions and free "Parenting Apart" information workshops to support parents who are no longer together to move forward from conflict and towards successful co-parenting.



If you are in conflict or have worries about joint parenting following the other parent's release from prison, child-focused mediation can be very helpful. If it is safe and appropriate, a mediator will meet with you both and help you have constructive, focused conversations with each other about your child/ren's needs, hopefully reaching an agreement about key points such as timings and days for the child to be with the other parent, their health, their routine, their schooling, holidays, and anything else relating to their lives.

What if I am worried about keeping my children safe after their parent is released?

If you have any concerns about the safety of your children, it is important that you seek support. There are many agencies and support services that can help you. You can speak to the [Families Outside helpline](#) in confidence on **0800 254 0088** to identify support available in your area.

Once they are released, will social work be involved?

If there were no child protection concerns with your family before your family member went to prison, then social work probably won't become involved after their release. People released from prison after serving a longer sentence will have a Criminal Justice Social Worker to support them to meet their licence conditions, but they do not have a child protection role. If your children were on the child protection register and were removed from this when your family member went to prison, then a child protection case conference will be held before your family member is released to decide if the children need to go back on the register.

If you, or your children, are concerned about your family member's release, please contact:

Parentline Scotland – 0800 028 2233

Relationships Scotland – 0345 119 2020

NSPCC helpline – 0808 800 5000

Childline – 0800 1111

Money, benefits, and employment

It is important that you and your family member know what they will live on when they are released from prison. If you will be living together once they are released, you need to talk openly about how you will manage money. In prison, your family member will not have had responsibility for bills, and they may need to adjust to looking after their finances again.

What financial support will be available for them when they get out?

In most cases your family member will receive a small discharge grant from the prison service when they are released from prison. They will not receive a discharge grant if they are under 18 or if they are released after being held on remand. They will also receive back any money they still have in their personal cash account and any money they had with them when they entered prison. Their travel costs to their home address within the UK will also be covered.

Your family member should claim any social welfare benefits he or she is eligible for as soon as possible after they are released and request a short-term benefit advance. They can apply for Universal Credit up to one month before they are released and request a short-term advance, however this will not be paid until they are released. They will need support from services available in prison to do this, as the application needs to be made online. Throughcare services or money advice services based in the prison's Link Centre may be able to help. In many cases your family member will be able to apply for a small resettlement grant or a crisis grant from their local authority if he or she has no other support.





How will their release affect me financially?

If you are receiving welfare benefits, then in most cases having a family member returning from prison to live with you will count as a change of circumstances. You should notify the agency you receive the benefits from that your family member has returned to live with you. If your child or young person has returned to live with you, you can ask for child benefit and any other benefits you were receiving for them to be reinstated. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) factsheet, Financial help for families affected by imprisonment, contains more detailed information about the financial support you may be entitled to and how to claim.

How can I help my family member to get back to work once they are out of prison?

Many people with convictions face challenges trying to find a job. They may need support and encouragement as they try to get back in to employment and adjust to working life. Many organisations around the country support people to find work after prison. Your family member can find out about these services prior to release.

Useful numbers:

- **Child Benefit Helpline – 0300 200 3100**
- **Tax Credits Helpline – 0345 300 3900**
- **Department for Work and Pensions – 0800 169 0310**
(old benefits)
- **Universal Credit portal – 0800 328 5644**
- **Wise Group – 0141 303 3131**
- **Apex Scotland – 0131 220 0130**
- **Sacro – 0131 624 7270**

Housing

Housing is another practical concern for families when someone is released from prison. You may be concerned about where your family member is going to live once they are released or be worried about them returning to the family home.

What support is there for my family member around housing?

In some prisons, housing advice projects help people with this through the Link Centre. If your family member had a tenancy prior to entering prison, it may be possible to maintain that tenancy if they are serving a short sentence or are in custody on remand, but it is likely that they will need some support to prevent them accruing arrears. Housing should be discussed at ICM, and referrals will be made to appropriate agencies in preparation for release. If your family member has a TSO, the TSO will also be able to provide advice and assistance around housing.

What if my family member can't live with me once they're released? Where will they go?

If you do not want your family member to live with you once they are released, or their licence conditions do not allow them to, it's important to be clear with them about this, especially if they were living with you before they went to prison.

If you have concerns about this, you can contact [*Criminal Justice Social Work*](#) or [*Families Outside*](#) for support.



Any person in prison with no address to return to can request a homelessness application from the local authority they are returning to, eight weeks prior to release. Local authorities in Scotland have a statutory duty to house homeless people who are not intentionally homeless and may provide a service within some prisons to make an application prior to release.

Can I get any help if my family member returns to the family home?

You may be entitled to apply for a Community Care Grant via your local authority to assist in purchasing any items needed to help support your family member. If you have concerns around how the return to the family home will impact your own housing situation, you can contact Shelter for advice.

If your family member has been convicted of a sexual offence, there are often restrictions on where they can live, and they may not be allowed to return to the family home. See the Families Outside booklet, *Picking Up the Pieces*, for more information.

Useful numbers:

- **Shelter Scotland Helpline – 0808 800 4444**
- **Contact your Local Authority to find your local Housing Support Team**

Make a Plan

Your family member’s release from prison is a long-awaited and exciting time for many, and a frightening and uncertain time for others. Either way, there is a lot to think about when your family member is released from prison.

The chart below may help you set out your plans in preparation for release, not all of these sections will be relevant for all families. Hopefully now that you have read this booklet, you will be able to identify what support you need.

Pre-release Check list:

Things to consider	Person in prison	Family
ICM	Permission to Attend Discussion Points: Key Dates, Conditions.	Date: Prepare List of Questions
Criminal Justice Social Work	Share Licence Conditions	Home Background report appointment
Children & Families Social Work	Date for Child Protection Case Conference:	Date for Child Protection Case Conference:
Life Skills	Attend Courses	Encourage Attendance
Housing	Name of Prison Contact:	Remind family member to contact prison support
Finance	Name of Prison Contact:	Name of Community Contact:
Throughcare	Name of Provider:	Encourage engagement of family member Prison TSO/Local Third Sector Agency.
Health	Speak to Prison Healthcare about regular medication and transition to community e.g Talk to Me Notes, Prescriptions.	Seek out local GP contact details.



Things to talk about as a family:

- Routines
- Children & Family Dynamics
- Concerns
- Addictions & Recovery
- How might their licence conditions affect how you live as a family?
- What support do you need?

Release

Create your own plan as a family:

Release	Date:
Pick up	
Appointments to Arrange	
Appointments to Attend	
Register with GP	
Meet with School	
Report Change of Circumstances (Benefits)	
Services to engage with	

Licence Conditions

Finally, if your family member was sentenced to four years or more or convicted of a sexual offence, they will be released on licence conditions set by the Parole Board. Specific conditions will be confirmed shortly before release, but there are 11 standard conditions that will apply to everyone on licence.

These are:

- To report to your supervising officer on your day of release
- To be of good behaviour and keep the peace
- To be under the supervision of a Criminal Justice Social Worker
- To comply with any requirements that worker specifies
- To reside only in accommodation as approved by your supervising officer
- To inform your supervising officer if you are arrested, detained, or questioned by the police
- To keep in touch with your supervising officer as instructed
- To inform your supervising officer if you change your place of residence or gain employment or change or lose your job
- Not travel outside the United Kingdom without your supervising officer's prior permission
- Cooperate with an organisation experienced in job search and advice
- Not undertake paid, unpaid, or voluntary work without prior approval of your supervising officer

Remember, whatever your queries or concerns, Families Outside is here to help.

Families Outside is the only national charity that works solely to support the families of people affected by imprisonment in Scotland. Our purpose is to improve outcomes for children and families affected by imprisonment so they can live healthy, active lives free from stigma and disadvantage.

For information and support:

Call our Helpline 0800 254 0088

Email support@familiesoutside.org.uk

Text FAMOUT followed by your message to 60777

Visit www.familiesoutside.org.uk

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supporting
families affected
by imprisonment

