

# Getting ready for your visit

This guide is to help people prepare for their person to person visit with those in our care during the COVID 19 pandemic.

The guide outlines what to expect and provides some helpful reminders so you can plan for, and safely enjoy, your visit.



## Our focus

As you will understand we have to be very careful to ensure we continue to prevent COVID-19 getting into our premises. We want to make sure everyone remains safe and well.

We have and will continue to make changes which will keep you, your loved one/those in our care and our staff safe.

All practices, and any changes we make, will be in line with public health advice.

## Who can visit?

To ensure the health and wellbeing of all:

- Only one visitor can visit an individual at a time;
- For the initial phase priority will be given to immediate family members or partners<sup>1</sup>;
- Children under the age of 16 will not be permitted to visit (or enter our premises)<sup>1</sup>;
- People who are shielding are strongly advised against visiting; and
- At this stage there will be a maximum of one in-person visit every four weeks, subject to availability.

**Do not visit if you, or someone you live with, are feeling unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) e.g. a high temperature.**

<sup>1</sup> In exceptional circumstances this can be referred to the Deputy Governor for particular consideration



Department of  
**Justice**

[www.justice-ni.gov.uk](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk)

NORTHERN IRELAND  
**PRISON SERVICE**

## Arranging a visit

Those who have been in our care for more than 14 days and who are not in isolation can apply for a visit.

Your loved one will initiate the visit request through the internal booking mechanism. If the visit is approved, you will be contacted by the booking office and given a time, date and reference number. You should bring the reference number with you to the visit.

You should advise the booking office if you require specific support and assistance before, during or after the visit (this should include any relevant allergies e.g. to latex).

The visit will be for a maximum duration of 45 minutes.

**If the person in our care shows or experiences symptoms of COVID-19 or any other infection, the visit will be cancelled.**

## Travel to the premises

Currently all assisted transport facilities are suspended. So you will need to safely make your own way to the prison.

If you are using public transport please ensure you leave plenty of time for the journey and adhere to current public health guidance.

In line with Government guidance, as of 10 July, you must wear a face covering when on public transport.

### Helpful links for more information:

[Translink](#)

[Public Health Agency](#)

[UK Government advice – How to make a cloth face covering](#)

## On arrival

On arrival you will notice that the visitor centres are closed<sup>2</sup>. You should therefore make your way to the main visitor gate/entrance and you will be directed from there. Parking will be available in the visitors parking area.

**Please note** – When availing of visitor transport you must abide by social distancing and any current Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) requirements. For example you must wear a face covering on the bus, which will be provided.

## Toilets

To minimise any risk, toilets will be available to use at visits reception only, but not during the period of your visit.

## Temperature check

As with many premises, visitors will be required to undertake a temperature check upon entry.

Where a raised temperature is detected by the equipment, entry will be refused on this occasion to protect people in our care, staff and other visitors.

In these circumstances the individual will receive the latest public health advice on self-isolation and testing.



## Sanitising hands

Visitors will be required to sanitise their hands:

- on entering the premises;
- on entering the visits area;
- on leaving the visits area;
- on leaving the premises;
- when required/requested to do so.

<sup>2</sup> This will be kept under review and guidance shall be updated should this change

## Personal items

Only the individual named in the application may enter the premises and attend the visit. If this is your first visit please ensure you bring photographic evidence of your identity, this includes:

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

Bring as few items as possible into the premises. Only small items such as car keys or wallets/purses are allowed. These will be stored in lockers at the owner's risk.

**Please note that no parcels or money lodgements will be accepted.**

Further information about sending mail and making lodgements is available at [Information for families during the Coronavirus pandemic](#).

## Search procedures

Normal search procedures apply - You will go through a full rub-down search by staff who will be wearing PPE (e.g. gloves and face covering) for your protection.

All visitors will also 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.

**Anybody refusing to be searched will be refused entry.**

## The visits area

The visits area has been adapted to take account of current public health guidance and ensure social distancing.

When entering you will notice:

- Visiting pods are well spaced out;
- Each pod uses safety screens;
- Social distancing requirements are highlighted;
- There is a flow system to follow marked out on the floor; and
- All refreshment facilities will be closed.

When you are in the visiting area please:

- Maintain social distancing;
- Make your way directly to your visiting pod;
- Remain seated throughout the visit;
- Have no physical contact with the person you are visiting, any other visitor or prisoner, at any time during the visit; and
- Follow staff instructions at all times.

**Please also note - should you have to leave the visiting area, for any reason, there is no guarantee that you will be able to return.**

Remember that minimising movement around the visits area and maintaining social distancing from other persons present reduces the risk of the spread of COVID 19.





## Virtual Visits

Virtual visits are here to stay. Since they began in April 2020, virtual visits have been very popular, so we are going to ensure they continue, even when person to person visits start again.

Where possible virtual visiting remains the preferred option as this helps to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19

All measures have been put in place to protect you, your loved one/individuals in our care and our staff and as such will be reviewed regularly.

**Thank you  
for taking time  
to read this  
guidance**

### A HELPFUL REMINDER

# Getting ready for your visit

This 'checklist' is provided to assist you prepare for an in person visit as they are not in the format that you may be used to.

**Most importantly - Do not visit if you, or someone you live with, are feeling unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) e.g. a high temperature.**

- ✓ You must come alone to the visit and the premises – so please make arrangements for any dependants
- ✓ Advise the booking office if you have particular needs or require additional support
- ✓ Take some time to think about what you want to talk about. We want everyone to get the most out of their visit
- ✓ Leave plenty of time to travel to/from, and enter/exit, the premises
- ✓ If you are travelling by taxi/public transport please wear a face covering - you may need to bring more than one with you
- ✓ If this is your first visit, make sure you have photographic identification with you
- ✓ Please bring the booking reference with you
- ✓ Please follow the direction provided by signage
- ✓ Please follow the instruction given by staff
- ✓ If unsure of anything please ask a member of staff
- ✓ During the visit remain seated and let staff know if you need to leave



## Support available for families

Families can avail of support from a number of sources.

Family Support Officers within each establishment are available to provide support and guidance to families and friends. They can be contacted on the following numbers:

Maghaberry	(0044) 028 9261 6067
Magilligan	(0044) 028 7776 3311
Hydebank Wood College	(0044) 028 9049 4331

Our voluntary and community sector partners are continuing to provide support to families at this worrying time.

Details can be found below with further contact details at [At a glance – Contacts](#):

### NIACRO

NIACRO's Family Links team offer practical and emotional support to help families and children cope with the imprisonment of a loved one. Your relative in prison can pass your contact details onto NIACRO who will make contact with you within 24 hours. Or, if you wish, you can phone NIACRO directly to find out about how the team can help you, for example, with benefits and welfare advice, budgeting and emotional support. The team also offer tailored one to one support for children/siblings. Children and young people can also receive help with making cards or writing letters to be sent to the prison. All support is currently being offered by telephone/video calls. Family Links is also available to provide support to families of those being released under the Temporary Early Release Scheme.

<https://www.niacro.co.uk/>

### Barnardo's

Barnardo's are continuing to provide support for children and families. Barnardo's are also available to provide support to families of those being released under the Temporary Early Release Scheme.

In addition, if your relative in custody needs support in relation to their parental role, Barnardo's will assist where possible.

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/northern-ireland>

### Housing Rights

In addition to providing housing support for those in prison and ex-offenders, Housing Rights will provide families with advice on their housing needs. They will help and advise those who are worried about homelessness, finding a suitable place to live, paying for their homes, bad housing and disrepair.

<https://www.housingrights.org.uk/>

### Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy support provided in prison establishments is also available to family members upon request through your loved one in custody.

### Prison Fellowship

Prison Fellowship is offering emotional and social support to families of prisoners. Family workers are happy to make regular contact with family members providing emotional support over the phone and where necessary signpost to a relevant organisation or Prison Fellowship volunteer in your local area. They will also seek to provide practical support for families through activity packs for children under 16 years of age with a parents consent.

<https://www.pfni.org/>

# At a glance: Contacts

Organisation, service & details		Contact (Tel UK code 0044)
<b>Prisoner Accounts</b>		
Maghaberry Prison		028 9261 4026
Magilligan Prison		0300 200 7866
Hydebank Wood College		0300 200 7866
<b>Family Support Officers</b>		
Maghaberry Prison		028 9261 6067
Magilligan Prison		028 7776 3311
Hydebank Wood College		028 9049 4331
<b>Probation Board for Northern Ireland</b>		028 9052 2522
<b>Partners</b>		
<b>Barnardo's</b>	Maghaberry Prison	07740515042
		07594512284
	Magilligan Prison Hydebank Wood College	07763580036 07593501786
<b>Housing Rights</b>	Housing and Debt Helpline	028 9024 5640
<b>NIACRO</b>	Families Helpline <i>(inc Family Links)</i>	0800 169 2207
	Individuals on release	028 9032 0157
<b>Prison Fellowship</b>	Family Workers	028 9024 3691

