Help with Prison Visits Scheme

I live in Northern Ireland, England, Wales or Scotland. Can I get help with the cost of visiting someone in prison?

If you are a close relative or partner of a prisoner and you are in receipt of certain benefits or on a low income then you may be eligible for assistance with your travel costs from the Help with Prison Visits Scheme (HWPV) Get help with the cost of prison visits - GOV.UK

Who can apply?

The following categories can apply if they are also on low income (see below).

- Husband, Wife or Civil Partner
- Partner - living as a couple before the prisoner went into prison
- Parent or Grand-parent (includes step-parent or adoptive parent)
- Brother or Sister (includes half-sibling or step-sibling)
- Son or Daughter (includes step or adoptive)
- Next of Kin (as noted by the prisoner in prison records)
- Sole Visitor (only Social visitor in the four weeks before a visit claimed)
- Escort to a qualifying adult or child.

Who qualifies for help?

To qualify for assistance under the scheme you must first be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
- Universal Credit (an income limited applies)
- Pension Credit

You may be eligible for help under the scheme if you are not in receipt of any of the above benefits but are on a low income and hold a Health Certificate 2 or 3.

Which prisons can I visit?

The scheme will provide a contribution to the cost of making a prison visit to all prison establishments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. People living in Northern Ireland may avail of help under this scheme to visit family members in prison in the UK. This is also the case for those living in the UK with family members imprisoned in Northern Ireland.

How often can I visit?

Help is normally provided with the cost of two visits every 28 days and up to a maximum of 26 visits in a year. This limit is applicable whether the prisoner is on remand or has been convicted or sentenced. Assisted visits can be saved up to allow two or more consecutive visits to take place during one return journey. It is possible to get help with a visit if you are meeting a prisoner who is being released on temporary licence. You must be meeting your family member at the prison.

How do I apply?

Northern Ireland:

You can get information about apply for the assisted prison visits scheme in Northern Ireland by emailing assistedprisonvisits@justice-ni.gov.uk or by writing to:
Resettlement Brance
PO Box 62
Maghaberry Prison
17 Old Road
Lisburn BT28 2PT.
You can get advice and help with our application by contacting ICPO, the Family Links staff at NIACRO or the Family Support Officer at the prison

UK
You can apply online. You must have an email address to apply online and you must register before you can make your application. You will need the following in order to apply:

- the prisoner number
- the date of the visit
- your National Insurance number
- any receipts
- a prison visit form stamped by the prison.

You can also apply by filling in an application form. You can get this form by emailing HelpwithPrisonVisits@justice.gov.uk or phone 03000632100. You can also request the form by writing to:
Help with Prison Visits, PO Box17594, Birmingham B2 2QP.

The completed application form should be posted to Help with Prison Visits (at the above address) within 28 days of making the visit along with proof of expenses. It may be possible to apply for advance payments. Visitors should contact Help with Prison Visits or ICPO for guidance in making such an application.

What does the scheme cover?
You can travel to the prison by car, motor cycle or public transport. You will be paid for the cheapest method of public transport available for the journey you are making. Make sure to get receipts and send them with your application. Taxi journeys to bus stops or railway stations will be considered only if you are aged over 75 or the walking distance is more than 20 minutes one way. You do not need to obtain receipts for petrol when travelling by private motor car as the cost of making the journey will be paid on a per mile basis based on the total distance between the visitor's home and the prison. You may be eligible to claim for some assistance towards the cost of an overnight stay if you need to leave home before 6am or arrive home after midnight (or before 7am and after 10pm if you are taking children under 3). You must get approval before incurring overnight expenses.

Who can help me apply?
While generally speaking the scheme works in a straight-forward way, you might wish to contact ICPO or the other organisations listed below for advice and assistance in the initial phases. Please note that as people's circumstances vary it is not possible to include every piece of information about the scheme here.
ICPO, PO Box 13484, Maynooth, Co Kildare, Ireland. Tel: +353 (0)1 5053156. Email: info@icpo.ie
ICPO, PO Box75693, London NW1W 7ZT, UK. Tel: +442074825528.
Email:prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk
NIACRO, Amelia House, 4 Amelia Street Belfast BT2 7GS, Northern Ireland Tel: 028 9032 0157 Email: niacro@niacro.co.uk
Help with Prison Visits, PO Box17594, Birmingham B2 2QP, UK. Tel: 03000632100. Email: HelpwithPrisonVisits@justice.gov.uk