



Opening Hours

Monday to Friday

9.00am - 8.00pm

Saturday and Sunday

10.00am - 3.00pm

Help with the cost of prison visits

Can I get help with the cost of visiting someone in prison?

If you are the 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 Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVU).

Who can apply?

Close relative is defined as wife, husband, civil partner, natural or adoptive mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, grandparent, step/half brother/sister, step child, step parent or someone who has acted in loco parentis for a significant part of the prisoner's childhood. A partner can be someone in a heterosexual or a same sex relationship with the prisoner.

You can also apply for assistance, if you meet all other criteria, and you are not a close relative of the prisoner but you are the sole visitor to that prisoner.

You may also be eligible for assistance if you are escorting a qualifying young person or adult to visit someone in prison. (Please request the APVU Customer Service Guide for more information).

Who qualifies for help?

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

- Income Support
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Based (not contribution based) Job Seeker's Allowance
- Tax Credit
- Pension Credit
- Universal 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. Application forms for a Health Certificate 2 or 3 are available from the Helpline.

Which prisons can you visit?

The scheme will provide a contribution to the cost of making a prison visit to all prison establishments in England, Wales and Scotland (including Young Offender Institutions). Qualifying visitors living in England Wales or Scotland can also claim assistance with the cost of visiting a prison in Northern Ireland.

Qualifying visitors living in England, Wales or Scotland can also claim assistance towards the cost of visiting a prison in Guernsey or Jersey although this is restricted to one visit every six months.

How often can you 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 sentenced/convicted.

What does the scheme cover?

The scheme will contribute towards the cost of travel to the prison by rail, bus, private motor vehicle, coach, ferry, car hire, taxi and air travel. The reimbursement of taxi fares is restricted to certain circumstances therefore it is better to check with the APVU prior to making any journey by taxi. It is important to retain all tickets and receipts relating to the journey as these will need to be provided to the APVU for reimbursement. You do not need to obtain receipts for petrol when travelling by private motor vehicle 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.

If the journey is particularly difficult, significantly long or there is limited public transport you may be eligible to claim for some assistance towards the cost of an overnight stay. Other factors will be taken into account when claiming so it is important to check eligibility with the APVU prior to arranging any accommodation.

The cost of a registered child-minder or breakfast/after school club or similar may be considered if you do not wish to take a qualifying child under the age of 16 to the prison.

How do you apply?

All qualifying visitors should complete an application form. In addition, a 'confirmation of a visit' slip will need to be stamped on arrival to the prison in order to validate the claim. The completed application form should be posted to the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, at the address below, within 28 days of making the visit along with proof of expenditure.

You can also submit your claim in advance but please allow sufficient time for the APVU to process your claim.

Prisoners' Families Helpline staff are able help with the completion of claim forms.

Contact Details

Address: APVU, PO Box 2152 Birmingham, B15 1SD

Telephone: 0300 063 2100 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays)

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

