

## Families and children

It can be daunting for anyone visiting a prison especially children. The Invisible Service has special books and resources to help explain about prison and preparing children for a visit. Children are allowed on visits providing the prisoner has not been assessed unsuitable for contact with children, in which case special rules will apply. Some visiting halls will have family friendly areas where children can move around and play.

## Family visit days

Most prisons have special family visit days which allow for families to spend quality time together without the constraints of a normal visit. Contact the prison for further details.

## The visit

All prisons will require valid ID, including ID for children in some cases. You are allowed to take a small amount of money into the visit with you for refreshments (Each prison can be different, it is best to check with the prison beforehand). All other belongings are placed into a locker. To ensure you are fully prepared for your first visit check online for individual prison guidelines on permitted items. Everyone is searched for security reasons, even children. This may include a full pat down and the use of trained sniffer dogs.

## Financial help

If you are on benefits or a low income, you can apply for financial help. You will need to complete an Assisted Visit Application form and a Confirmation of Visit form will need to be stamped during the visit. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/assisted-prison-visits-form](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assisted-prison-visits-form)

**Invisible Lives Service works with children, young people and their families to offer advice and support when affected by parental offending or the criminal justice system. For more details call: 01268 558448 or 07947 219802 or email:**

**[invisiblelives@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:invisiblelives@barnardos.org.uk)**

# Invisible Lives Child & Family Support

A guide for families  
on the stages of the  
Criminal Justice System



**Supporting children and families in the  
community affected by parental offending**



**Believe in  
children  
Barnardo's**  
Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Essex

## What happens after arrest?

If the police have enough evidence for the crime, the individual will either be released on bail or remanded in custody. There are two types of bail; unconditional when the only requirement placed on the individual is that they must attend court, or conditional bail when there are rules which must be obeyed.

If remanded in custody the individual will usually be held at the nearest prison until the hearing at a Magistrates' Court. If found guilty, any time spent in custody before the trial will be taken off the sentence. All criminal cases begin in the Magistrates' Court, however; depending on the seriousness of the crime the case may be sent to the Crown Court.

## Visiting someone on remand;

Someone on remand can have three visits a week. However this can vary depending on the individual prisons' visiting sessions.



## What happens at court?

Ask your family member what time they are having their case heard at court and you should aim to arrive at least 30 minutes before this time. Be aware that the waiting room can be very busy at different times as the court has a number of court rooms. Most court buildings open a short time before the first hearing at 10am.

## Children

Courts try to run on time but this is dependent on individual cases. Therefore you should arrange suitable childcare or after school care should the case over run. Children under the age of 14 years old are not permitted to attend a court hearing. They can however wait with a responsible adult in the court waiting area. Some Magistrates and Crown Courts may have a small play area.

## Sentenced to prison:

If the individual is sentenced they will be taken straight to a cell and it will not possible to see them. Depending on the length of sentence they may be sent to a local prison or to another prison depending on the security category given on reception.

## Preparing for a first visit:

Some prisons grant a reception visit. These visits are usually made within 72 hours of sentencing. For these visits you will need to book by contacting the prison direct. A prisoner will be given a unique prison number once they have been processed at the prison. You will need this to book any visits and when sending correspondence.

## Booking visits;

Visits can be booked online, via [www.gov.uk/prison-visits](http://www.gov.uk/prison-visits). The service is open 24 hours, seven days a week. A visitor is allowed to select three possible dates/times for one visit. The booking staff will check that the visitors named on the form are on the prisoners approved visitors list and not banned from the prison. Once checks are completed a confirmation email will be sent confirming the visit date. Visits can also be made via telephone to the individual prisons' booking line number.

## Travel and Transport

It is a good idea to check transport routes as some prisons are not easy to get to and may require more than one change of bus or train.

Also some prisons do not have allocated visitor parking and you will need to use local public car parks which will incur a charge.

