



VISITING AND KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you are un-convicted (i.e. a remand prisoner), you will not need to send your family or friends a Visiting Order so that they can visit. You are allowed a minimum of 1 ½ hours of visits every week. Usually a prison will let you have more than this, unless it is overcrowded or short of staff.

In the case of Exeter prison, these visits are:

Remand Basic	2x 1 hour or 1x 2 hour visits per week
Remand Standard	2x 1 hour or 1x 2 hour visits per week
Remand Enhanced	2 x 2 hour visits per week

It is up to the Governor to decide when visits will be. Normally, you can have a visit of at least 15 minutes every day (except on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday). The minimum you should get is a visit on 3 days each week and a visit on a Saturday or Sunday once a fortnight.

The present visiting regime at Exeter Prison is:

Monday	14:15 - 16:15
Tuesday	14:15 - 16:15
Thursday	14:15 - 16:15
Friday	14:15 - 16:15
Saturday	14:15 - 16:15
Sunday	14:15 - 16:15

Up to 3 adults and your children can come on each visit, but they must all visit at the same time. It is a good idea to find out who will be visiting you and when, because if another group of people turn up on the same day, they may not be able to see you.

If there are visits every day, the prison will often let you have longer than 15 minutes, however sometimes this is not possible. If this is a problem for you – for example your visitor has a long way to travel or is ill or disabled, and it would be easier for them to visit less often but for a longer time – ask your Landing Officer if this can be arranged.

The facilities for visitors at Exeter Prison visiting room are –

Seating	Maximum 3 seated adults + any number of children
Refreshments	Hot & cold drinks and snacks
Toilets	With baby changing facilities and disabled access
Child Facilities	Supervised creche
Cash Allowed In Room	Reasonable amount, coins only

Visits must be pre-booked by your visitors.

At Exeter Prison the pre booking arrangement is –

Booking Phone No.	01392 415 833
Booking Opening Time	Mon - Fri: 9:00 – 12:00 & 13:30 - 16:30
Minimum Booking Notice	24 Hours
Booking Email Address	socialvisits.exeter@hmps.gsi.gov.uk
Min Age Unaccompanied	18

Your visitor will not be allowed to hand in cigarettes, tobacco, sweets or food for you. They can sometimes bring in clothes for you, which you can exchange for clothes for them to take away and wash. If your visitor is not sure if they can bring something in on a visit, they should telephone the prison first. You may need to get permission from the prison for something to be brought in on a visit as an un-convicted prisoner, you may be allowed to have more things brought in on a visit than a convicted prisoner. If you are subsequently convicted, you may find you are no longer allowed to have items which are regarded as privileges, and they will need to be handed out on the visit.

Similarly, you will need to check with the prison what items they allow to be sent in to you by Recorded Delivery.

Searching of visitors is necessary for security reasons and for the safety of the prisoners and their visitors, including children. Your visitors may refuse a search, but the Prison has the right to refuse them entry. However if staff have reasonable cause to suspect that the visitor is trying to bring in drugs or a firearm, then they have the right to search without consent. This could be a strip search which will normally be carried out by the Police.

If you are visited by a close relative who receives Income Support, Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance, Tax Credits or has a low income, they may be able to get help for the cost of visiting.

Close relative means spouse, daughter, son, mother, father, sister, brother or adoptive/step/half brother, sister, stepchild or stepparent. Partners may also qualify if you have lived together for four months or longer immediately before you were sent to prison. Proof that you live together will be required.

Eligible visitors can claim for a visit as soon as you are taken into custody, and after that, every 14 days. They can claim for two visits at a time, to a maximum of 26 visits in 12 months.

Application forms for assistance are available from Prisons, Visitors' Centres, Benefit Agency Offices and the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, PO Box 2152, Birmingham, B15 1SD Tel: 0845 300 1423 Customer Enquiry Line 10.15 – 11.45 a.m and 2.15 and 3.45 p.m.

Once your visitors have filled in the application form for the first claim, the ABVU will send them their payment (normally a Giro cheque or a rail warrant) with a simpler form for their next claim. It is important to claim immediately for visits, as payment can only be made for those visits taken within the 28 days prior to the application being received at the ABVU. However payment can be made in advance of the visit as long as the application is sent to the ABVU two weeks before the visit is due.

If you are told you are going to be moved, you should ask straightaway for a Special Letter to let your visitors know. This letter is free. If there is not enough time to write, you can ask Prison staff to make one phone call to inform your visitors.

If your visitors have a wasted journey because they were not aware that you had moved to another prison, they should claim their travelling costs from the prison, unless the journey was already paid for the ABVU. In that case the prison will give them a note for the ABVU to make sure they are paid for travelling to the new Prison.

If you are un-convicted, you can send out two free letters every week. You can send out as many additional letters as you like as your own expense.

Normally, there is no limit to how many letters you can receive. Your letters will not usually be read, but the envelopes will be opened to make sure they do not contain anything which is not allowed. However from time to time the Governor can order that all post should be routinely read.

Similarly you can be limited on the number of letters that you send and how long they can be (though you must be allowed at least 4 sides of A5 paper), or you could be limited to receiving one letter for every one you send out. If this happens, you can choose which letter to read, and others will be sent back.

If these rules apply to you, you will be permitted to buy at least one extra letter at Christmas and up to 12 Christmas Cards and stamps from the canteen.

However letters to and from Solicitors should not be read or stopped by anyone in the Prison Service. You should write on the envelopes of these letters "Prison Rule 37A" – this is the prison rule which covers legal letters. You should then seal the envelope before you hand it in.

Prison Rule 37A also applies to letters to and from a Court. Other protected correspondence includes letters to the Samaritans and other organizations such as the Prisoner's Advice Service.

You are allowed to write letters to newspapers and contribute to radio and television programmes or submit articles to be published, as long as : -

- a) You do not write about your own offence or past offences
- b) You do not write about other people's offences
- c) You do not write about individual prisoners or members of staff
- d) You do not break any of the rules about letters.

If the recipient of any of your letters ask the Prison Service to stop sending your letters to them, you will be asked to stop writing. You must get permission to write to: -

- a) Another Prisoner at a different prison
- b) The victim of your offence or their family

If you have no private cash, the Prison will pay for the stamps on letters connected with the Defence of your case. These letters will be sent first class.

You can ask for an extra free letter: -

- a) To write to your Probation Officer

- b) If you have family problems
- c) If you arranging a job or somewhere to live on your release

The rules about letters are they must not: -

- 1) Discuss escape plans or anything which affects Prison security
- 2) Help someone commit a Criminal Offence of an Offence against Prison Rules
- 3) Contain threats of blackmail
- 4) Affect National Security
- 5) Say anything racially offensive or obscene

As an un-convicted prisoner, you can buy phone card from the prison shop with your private cash. Phone cards cannot be sent in from outside – only special prison service phone cards will work in the prison telephones.

An official telephone maybe used if you need a Solicitor's advice. A random number of telephone calls may be listened to by Prison Officers.

Should you require advice and assistance about prison law at any time, we shall be pleased to refer you to a source of specialist advice.

Dunn & Baker – Here to help you

Disclaimer: The material contained in this fact sheet is for general guidance only. It is specific to the law of England and Wales, and represents a brief outline of the law current as at the date of the fact sheet. It is not intended to constitute, or to be a substitute for, legal advice specific to your case. Dunn and Baker will be responsible only for advice specifically given to you.