



The Prison Outreach Project
Four Square (Scotland)
4th floor, 28 North Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1QG.
Telephone: 0131 270 5004
E-mail: carolinef@foursquare.org.uk
Web: www.foursquare.org.uk

And at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Cover from a design by Paul Richmond



Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No. 78319.
Registered as a Charity by the Inland Revenue.
Scottish Charity No. 17242.



Facing prison?
Read this now

Housing information for offenders and their families

Housed or homeless this pack is for **YOU**

It contains information on:

- ✓ Council or Housing Association tenancies
- ✓ Housing Benefit / Council Tax
- ✓ Private tenant / owner occupier
- ✓ Securing your home
- ✓ Personal belongings
- ✓ Accommodation for your release
- ✓ Useful contacts



WARNING:

Doing nothing puts you
at risk of losing your home

Council or Housing Association tenancies

If you are a council or housing association tenant, you must give your landlord the following information as soon as possible:

- the length of your sentence and expected date of release
- the address of the prison
- what you intend to do about your tenancy
- your new address, if you are transferred to another prison
- any changes in circumstances during your sentence.

It may be possible to:

- transfer the tenancy to any member of the household who normally lives with you, giving them greater rights to the property
- sub-let

Or you may be required to give up your tenancy.

You should contact your local housing office for further advice on these options. If you are in prison, check if there is a housing advice worker.

Rent still needs to be paid while you are in prison. If Housing Benefit covers your rent, please refer to the leaflet marked Housing Benefit / Council Tax.

Council or Housing Association tenancies



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Housing Benefit / Council Tax

Sentenced offenders can claim Housing Benefit if they serve 13 weeks or less in custody. If you are serving more than 13 weeks, you will not be entitled to Housing Benefit.

The following categories of offenders are entitled to claim Housing Benefit for up to 52 weeks:

- remand offenders
- unconvicted offenders waiting for trial
- convicted offenders waiting to hear their sentence

Once sentenced, your circumstances immediately change and you need to let your local Revenues Section know:

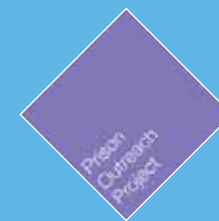
- if you were not receiving Housing Benefit before you were taken into custody, you need to claim as soon as possible.
- if you were living with your partner or family they may be able to make a Housing Benefit / Council Tax claim in their own right.
- if you were claiming Housing Benefit before you went to prison, you need to make a 'fresh claim' immediately, otherwise your Housing Benefit will stop.

When claiming you must say that you are going to return to the property when you are released, and that the accommodation is not being let or sublet while you are inside, otherwise Housing Benefit will be stopped.

Sole occupiers can claim exemption from council tax whilst in prison.

Contact your local Revenues Office or your local advice agency for more information. If you are in prison, check if there is a housing advice worker.

Housing Benefit / Council Tax



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Private tenant

If you are a private tenant, you must let your landlord know the following information as soon as possible:

- the length of your sentence and expected date of release
- the address of the prison
- what you intend to do about your tenancy
- your new address, if you are transferred to another prison
- any changes in circumstances during your sentence

You may be required to give up your tenancy.

Rent still needs to be paid while you are in prison. If Housing Benefit covers your rent, please refer to leaflet marked Housing Benefit / Council Tax.

Contact your local advice agency for more information.

Owner occupier

You will need to contact your mortgage lender and insurance company to inform them of any changes in circumstances.

Seek advice from your local advice agency if you are going to put someone in your property to look after it while you are in prison.

Private tenant / owner occupier



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Securing your home

If your home is left empty, you will need to think about the best way to secure it. You could ask a friend or relative to keep an eye on it for you. If your home is rented and you do this, remember to let the landlord know.

Gas and electricity companies

Before you go into prison, contact your gas and electricity companies, giving them your name, home address and date of release. The gas company will, in certain circumstances, lock off the meter in your absence. Gas and electricity companies should be able to come to an agreement during your time in prison.

Securing your home



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Personal belongings

If it is necessary to terminate your tenancy it will be your responsibility to ensure that all items are removed from the property. The landlord may destroy them and may charge you for this.

Personal belongings

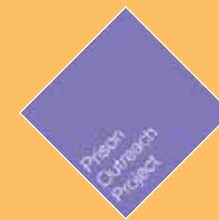


at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Accommodation for your release

Enquire as soon as possible if there is a housing advice worker in the prison. If there is no housing advice worker, contact the local area housing office or speak to prison staff.

Accommodation for your release



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont

Useful contacts

Shelter: free housing advice helpline
tel: 0808 800 444

Scottish Prisoners Families Helpline
freephone: 0500 83 93 83

Debt / financial advice
Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can help. See local directory
for telephone number.

The City of Edinburgh Council
Switchboard: 0131 200 2000
Central Edinburgh: 0131 529 7061
North Edinburgh: 0131 529 5050
West Edinburgh: 0131 527 3800
South Edinburgh: 0131 529 5151
East Edinburgh: 0131 529 3111

Useful contacts



at HMP Edinburgh, HMP Cornton Vale and YOI Polmont