



Guideline for prison visiting

Many of our visiting volunteers find visits to prisons very rewarding whilst providing companionship and sharing a compassionate ear with inmates. Jack and Pals Therapy Dogs have mandatory guidelines which are put in place to ensure our visits are following procedures set by prisons and that our members and their canine pals stay safe and professional.

Many of our requests come through volunteer and whilst we are happy for you to organise your own visits, we ask you let us know at the earliest opportunity that you are going to visit a prison.

Before you visit, we ask you to ensure the following are put into place before your first visit.

- You must provide us with a named person and their contact details in the prison who is your main point of contact for you and us.
- Ensure that you have provided all the necessary documentation required by the prison, this may include a full enhanced DBS check, and having your photograph taken and also your finger prints.
- You provide us with a copy of any risk assessment carried out by the prison which may have specific requests you have to adhere to. We will provide our own template to any prison but this will not go deep enough for settings.
- You must wear your polo top at all times. This identifies you immediately in case of any incidents.
- Your canine pal must wear their Jack and Pals Therapy Dog collar, bandana and lead.
- Your dog's name tag or slider tag must be removed. Your name and address should not be visible.
- You should not wear any jewellery except a wedding or special ring.
- You must display your breakaway ID badge showing your dog's photograph and yours.
- Request a space for your dog to be safe and receive water if needed or a comfort break.
- You must log your emergency contact details with us and the prison. We have your details from when you registered with us but please ensure these are up to date.
- You must let us know your next of kin and details of someone to call in an emergency. The prison will also request these details.
- You must let us know the name and address of your registered vet.
- Only take your essential items, such as dog poo bags.
- Establish the correct way to address staff and how you should be addressed. This may include using family names only, or salutations such as Miss, Madam, Sir or Mr.
- You may be asked to undertake training, which may include awareness training, personal protection and general safety training as well as fire evacuation training.
- You should be informed of any emergency evacuation procedures, including lockdowns, fire or alarms.
- You will not be allowed to visit any prison who is detained due to animal abuse crimes, this must be made clear before you visit to your contact.
- Establish if any prisoners have allergies to dogs or items which maybe in any dog treats you take into prison.

On arrival for your visit

- You will undergo a security check when you arrive.
- Try not to take bags and limit what you carry in your pockets.
- You will not be allowed to take in any mobile phones, USB devices or a smart watch. It would be best to leave them at home.
- You will not be allowed to take in a drink, but may ask for one when inside the prison if needed.
- If you take a water bowl in for your canine pal, show it with any sealed water bottle on arrival.
- You may be asked to remove your shoes and coats for any security check.
- You will be escorted by a member of staff during the entirety of your visit from the minute you arrive to the minute you leave.
- You will not have access to any keys, keyboards, keycodes or equipment in the prison.
- You should never enter a cell or unit first; staff members will enter first.
- Often the prison has visits from the probation services and you should avoid contact with them or approach them unless specifically instructed to approach them.

During your visit

- Ensure you address staff and prisons as you are requested to do so.
- Be professional at all times.
- Remember, you do not know the prisoners and treat each one with dignity and respect. They are not friends; they are people you are visiting with your canine pal.
- Do not answer any questions you feel uncomfortable about. Prisons often develop high skills of obtaining information.
- In return, do not ask any personal information from prisoner or ask about their length of time in prison or why they are in prison.
- If a prisoner volunteers any information about themselves or their family, do not be judgemental or give an opinion. Remain neutral at all times.
- During your visit, do not give information about your family, their names or where you live or your occupation. The prison will cover this in their awareness training.

After your visit

- Please do not discuss your visit with members of your family or friends.
- Do not mention anything about your visits on any social media platforms or in emails except to our admin.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following a serious incident, whichever comes first.

Adopted 1st May 2026

Review Date: 1st May 2027

Signed: Wendy Withington wendy@jackandpals.org