

Prison Officer Returners' Scheme: Frequently Asked Questions

I left HMPPS shortly after completing my prison officer probationary period.

Can I apply to re-join under the Prison Officer Returners' Scheme?

Yes, as long as you completed foundation training and your entire probation period, you will be eligible for the scheme. If you only partially completed your probation period, you will not be eligible for the scheme and [you will need to apply via the standard external prison officer recruitment process](#), meaning you will need to complete the online tests, attend the online assessment centre and repeat foundation training. If you completed your probation period in another HMPPS role, you must have worked for more than 12 months in the prison officer role.

I'm currently employed as a prison officer, can I apply for the Prison Officer Returners' Scheme to transfer to another prison?

No, this scheme is only available for former prison officers who have left the Prison Service and are not currently working for HMPPS.

Can I apply to work at the prison I used to work at?

Yes. You will be able to specify this as part of your online application. While we will aim to place you there, if the prison does not have any immediate vacancies, we will look to find you a role at one of your other prison choices. You will be able to select three preferences when you apply with the option to select more if you wish to do so.

What if there isn't a vacancy in any of the prisons I choose?

You will be offered the choice to join another prison that has immediate vacancies or you can be placed on the merit list for your chosen prisons until a position becomes available. If you are placed on the merit list, you will be prioritised into a vacancy over candidates applying via the external route.

Can I apply to a prison that's more than an hour away from where I live?

Yes, but you will not be able to reclaim the cost of your travel expenses. We will aim to place you at a prison that's within commuting distance (up to one hour) from your home. It is your responsibility to ensure that you always arrive at work on time.

Can I work part-time or other hours?

You can ask to work part-time or other hours but this will need to be approved by the prison where you would like to take up post. If you would like to continue with employment elsewhere alongside your part-time or other hours, this will need to be agreed by the prison that you will be returning to.

I'm retired, how does this apply to me?

HMPPS is keen to see retired prison officers return to work as your experience is valued. However, if you have a Civil Service pension you will have to work reduced (i.e. part-time or flexible) hours to avoid a reduction in your pension. [Read more here.](#)

Am I guaranteed re-employment as a prison officer?

Re-employment is discretionary. You will still be subject to full pre-employment checks before you start. You will not be re-employed if you were previously dismissed from the service following a disciplinary procedure. If you were dismissed on any other grounds you will need to demonstrate that the reasons for your dismissal would no longer apply.

Will I need to complete the assessment process again?

No (unless you would like to be a prison officer in a women's prison and have not been in this role previously or not completed the additional assessment for women's prisons previously – see next question). When your eligibility for the scheme has been confirmed, we will then review your preferences, and you will then be allocated to the next available vacancy. You will then need to do the medical and fitness assessment and pre-employment checks will be completed.

I would like to be a prison officer in a women's prison, will I need to do an assessment?

If you have not worked in a women's prison previously or not completed the additional assessment for women's prisons previously, there will be a short assessment which involves written responses to three behaviour-based questions, each of which requires a 250-word answer. You will need to return to an adult male prison if you do not pass this assessment.

Will I need to complete probation again?

You will not need to complete probation again.

Will I need to re-do foundation training?

You will not need to re-do foundation training. Instead, a head of function will sit down with you to complete a training needs analysis and then set up a learning path to bring you up to date with current working practices.

Will my fitness test, occupational health assessment and pre-employment checks be fast-tracked?

No, you will need to follow the standard prison officer processes once you are offered a position. Pre-employment checks typically take up to six weeks to complete and we will aim to get your health assessment and fitness test completed in the same time period.

What will I be paid?

You will return as a Band 3 on pay point 2. If you are returning as an OGD transfer, it might be pay point 3.

When will I be paid?

You will be paid on the last working weekday of each month. If this falls on a public holiday you will be paid on the previous Friday.

Will I get paid an unsociable work allowance?

Yes, all prison officers have to work unsociable hours as part of their work patterns. You will get paid a 20% unsocial hours allowance for all unsociable hours that you work.

Will I have to work nights?

All prison officers are required to work nights, during the evening and at weekends, though this will vary depending on what shift pattern you are assigned to. You will have an opportunity to discuss this once you have been offered a position.

What is the annual leave entitlement?

You have been given a new contract so your leave entitlement will be the same as a new starter i.e. 25 days annual leave per year plus the public holiday entitlement. Employees who work reduced hours have the same leave entitlement as full-time employees but calculated on a pro rata basis.

Will I be given a new employee number?

Yes, you will be given a new employee number.

Will I need to sign the Official Secrets Act again?

Yes. As a member of staff you are required to protect and exercise care in the use of information acquired during the course of your work. Staff are bound by the provisions of the Official Secrets Act.

When will I be given a start date?

You will be invited to the start date call once your pre-employment checks are complete and you have passed the medical/fitness assessment. You decide your start date (which must be on a Monday) but it will usually need to be at least three weeks after the start date call to give the prison time to prepare for your return.

When should I hand my notice in with my current employer?

We advise not to give notice to your current employer until your pre-employment checks have been completed and you have been contacted to arrange a start date. If you are currently a civil servant, you must not resign as you will be transferred across to HMPPS.

I have been given a full-time contract which says 37 hours, can I increase to 39 or 41?

All new full-time contracts for prison officers are for 37 hours. You can choose to increase to 39 or 41 once in post.

I have been given a part-time contract but have a question relating to it, who do I need to contact?

You can email your question to: PrisonsResourcing-Projects@justice.gov.uk

I have a question relating to my starting salary, who do I need to contact?

You can ask about your starting salary once your eligibility for the scheme has been confirmed.

I have a question relating to the scheme that is not included in this FAQ document, what should I do?

You can email your question to: PrisonsResourcing-Projects@justice.gov.uk

For the full set of prison officer FAQs, please visit the [HMPPS Prison Officer Application Centre Information Portal](#).