

Contact us at:

ICPO  
52 Camden Square  
LONDON  
NW1 9XB

Tel: 0207 482 4148

Email: [prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk](mailto:prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk)

Website: [www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk)

Irish prisoners outside of England and Wales should contact:

Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Columba Centre,

Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

Tel: +353 (0)1 505 3156

Email: [icpo@iecon.ie](mailto:icpo@iecon.ie)

IRISH CHAPLAINCY

Looking ahead with hope

Reg. Charity No. 1160365



## Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

# PRISONER HANDBOOK

*The work of the Irish Chaplaincy is funded in part by grants from the Government of Ireland, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, and by the support of many generous friends.*

*ICPO is a project of the Irish Chaplaincy Reg Charity No. 1160365*

# The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)

This handbook has been written as a guide for Irish prisoners in England and Wales. It shares 25 years of our experience listening and responding to thousands of requests. We hope it answers at least some of your questions. We hope we can help you through the time ahead with accurate information and where possible further support.

The **ICPO** was set up in 1985 to provide an outreach service to Irish prisoners and their families. We are a part of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, the parent organisation of The Irish Chaplaincy in Britain. It is estimated that there are over 1,200 Irish nationals in custody worldwide with the majority of these – some 900 plus – in England and Wales. We work with all Irish prisoners irrespective of religion, class or prison status. We see that more specific services are needed for Travellers, women and young offenders. It is not just prisoners who are affected by imprisonment; families, too, ‘do time’. Our colleagues in Maynooth, near Dublin, work closely with prisoners’ families offering advice, support and practical help.

## WE CANNOT

- get you out of prison, not even if you’re innocent; that’s your solicitor’s job
- find or employ solicitors
- prepare appeals
- provide repeat requests for financial assistance
- campaign to get you released
- provide legal advice
- speed up your transfer application
- organise or provide you with accommodation upon release
- recommend individual firms of solicitors

## WE CAN

- respond to phone messages & written requests
- visit you
- provide pastoral & spiritual support
- procure birth certificates
- supply forms for passports
- provide a pen-pal scheme
- monitor repatriation process
- provide limited financial help to newly convicted / remanded / transferred Irish prisoners
- liaise with and help families
- contact solicitors/probation officers
- provide ICPO newsletter / Christmas / St Patrick’s Day cards

Irish Community Care Centres in London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds...

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**Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy** (Originally founded to meet the needs of *Irish* immigrants resident in Britain)

96 Moray Road. Finsbury Park. London. N4 3LA

Tel: 0207 272 7906 Email: [info@icap.org.uk](mailto:info@icap.org.uk)

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**Probation Service** (England & Wales) Probation services are provided by 35 Probation Trusts across England and Wales.

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**OMU** (Offender Management Unit in the prison)

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**Prisons and Probation Ombudsman** (The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman investigates complaints from prisoners, those on probation and those held in immigration removal centres.)

Ashley House. 2 Monck Street. London. SW1P 2BQ

Tel: 020 7035 2876 or lo-call 0845 010 7938 Email: [mail@ppo.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ppo.gsi.gov.uk)

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**Prisoners Advice Service**

PO Box 46199. London. EC1M 4XA

Tel: 020 7253 3323 Email: [advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk)

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**Prison Reform Trust** (working to create a just, humane and effective penal system)

15 Northburgh Street. London EC1V 0JR Admin: 0207 251 5070

Free phone line for prisoners: 0808 802 0060

Line open: Monday 3.30pm - 7.30pm Tuesday 3.30pm - 5.30pm  
Thursday 3.30pm - 5.30pm

Information and advice on prison rules, life inside prison. We do not provide legal advice.

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**NACRO** (resettlement, youth projects, education and employment)

Park Place, 10-12 Lawn Lane. London SW8 1UD

Te: 020 7840 7200 Email: [enquiry@nacro.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@nacro.org.uk)

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**Crosscare Migrant Project** (assists intending Irish emigrants)

1 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1 Ireland

Tel: 00353 (1)873 2844 Email: [migrantproject@crosscare.ie](mailto:migrantproject@crosscare.ie)

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**The Legal Ombudsman** (free service—formal powers to resolve complaints about lawyers)

PO Box 6806, Wolverhampton. WV1 9WJ

Tel: 0300 555 0333 Email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

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**Solicitors Regulation Authority** (Complaints regarding Solicitors)

Tel: 0870 606 2555 Email: [contactcentre@sra.org.uk](mailto:contactcentre@sra.org.uk)

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

50-52 Camden Square London NW1 9XB

Tel: 0207 482 4148 Email: [prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk](mailto:prisoners@irishchaplaincy.org.uk)

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ICPO Irish Office

Columba Centre, Maynooth. Co. Kildare. Republic of Ireland

Tel: 00353 (1) 505 3156 Email: [icpo@iecon.ie](mailto:icpo@iecon.ie)

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### Embassy of Ireland 17 Grosvenor Place LONDON SW1X 7HR

Tel: 020 - 7235 2171

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### Embassy of Ireland Passport Office 114a Cromwell Road, London, SW7 4ES

Tel: 0207 373 4339

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### Law Society of England and Wales

Capital Tower Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF10 3AG

Tel: 029 2064 5254

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### Action for Prisoners' Families

Unit 21, 116 Putney Bridge Road, London, SW15 2NQ

Tel: 0208 812 3600

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### Prison Advice and Care Trust (range of services for prisoners and their families)

Park Place, 12 Lawn Lane. Vauxhall. London SW8 1UD

Tel: 020 7735 9535 Email: [info@prisonadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@prisonadvice.org.uk)

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### Prisoners' Families and Friends (support, friendship and advice)

20 Trinity Street, London SE1 1DB

Freephone Helpline for prisoners' families: 0808 808 3444

Admin: 020 7403 4091 Email: [info@pffs.org.uk](mailto:info@pffs.org.uk)

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### Bar Council (represents barristers in England and Wales)

289-293 High Holborn. London WC1V 7HZ

Tel: 020 7242 0082 Email: [contactus@barcouncil.org.uk](mailto:contactus@barcouncil.org.uk)

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**PPMI** (Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence) a working *network* composed of *prison* chaplains and visitors, support groups

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**Innocence Network UK** (practical response to the needs of alleged victims of wrongful conviction that have been identified in academic research) Willis Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol, BS8 1RJ. Email: [innocence-network@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:innocence-network@bristol.ac.uk)

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We are **not a legal organisation**. If you do have a lawyer, then with your permission, we can contact them on your behalf and offer assistance they might need with your case.

We cannot provide you with or organise accommodation upon release.

The most we can do is ensure that prison probation and outside probation keep you up-to-date on progress towards your release.



We have a full-time London prisons' worker and volunteer prison visitors in some of the other regions. Our small London-based office team comprises full-time and volunteer workers who aim to respond to your requests in a timely manner ensuring a reply as soon as possible. Enquiries are shared among the team, so you may not always receive a letter from the same person. The service offered is strictly confidential. Please do not make repeat requests for the same issue/need as this puts unnecessary pressure on our resources.

When you send us a letter or leave a message on our phone system, please be assured that we are dealing with your request as efficiently as we can.

We offer **limited financial assistance** to newly convicted / remanded / transferred prisoners for necessities like phone credit, toiletries, etc. Where possible, we are happy to **make contact with partners, family members** and listen, offer support and advice. If you think that your family would benefit from contact with us, please give us their details. Note, however, that we cannot discuss your case with any family member unless you have given us permission to do so.

## Personal Data Form

If you wish to use the services of the ICPO, you must sign our **Personal Data Form** which follows the Data Protection Act of 1998. We store your communication on paper and also on an electronic database. This database information may also be accessed by our colleagues in Ireland. Failure to sign this form will make it much more difficult for us to help you by contacting family members, prison probation or solicitors. Signing this form is the surest way of protecting the information you give us, and allows us to contact others on your behalf with your permission.



## Who is an Irish Prisoner?

A prisoner born in Ireland (or married to an Irish citizen) or eligible for Irish citizenship, is “Irish” for our purposes.

## What about Irish prisoners born in Britain?

We also include people living in Britain of Irish descent who may wish to avail of our services.



## Financial assistance for family visits

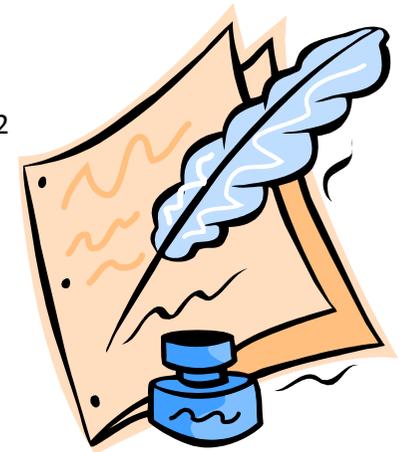
State assistance is offered to the families of prisoners living in the UK through the **Assisted Prison Visit Scheme**. **There are strict conditions but** advance payment to cover travel / accommodation costs can be claimed before a family member visits you. Write to us for the application forms. If your family is resident in the Republic of Ireland, we advise that they contact our colleagues :

ICPO, Columba Centre, Maynooth. Co. Kildare. R.O.I.  
Email: [icpo@iecon.ie](mailto:icpo@iecon.ie) Tel: 015053156

## Pen Friend scheme

The aim of the **Pen Friend Scheme** is to enable you to keep in touch with everyday life in Ireland. You must have a minimum of 2 years still remaining on your licence to apply for this scheme. It helps to counteract loneliness and may help you to think beyond the prison walls. It is not a match-making or long-term friendship service and the scheme automatically ceases when you are released. We ask the pen-friend to make initial contact by writing directly to you. You reply to the pen-friend and address the letter, care of **ICPO, Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co**

**Kildare, Ireland**. When your letter arrives there, it will be forwarded to your pen-friend. In the interests of both volunteers and prisoners, ICPO will occasionally and randomly open pen-friend letters to ensure that no inappropriate correspondence is taking place.



## Advocacy

While we **are not a legal firm** and our staff members have no legal training, we can advocate on your behalf on a wide range of prison matters such as probation, healthcare, education, transfers and allegations of mistreatment, victimisation or discrimination.



## Advice

There are a few issues that are of particular concern to Irish prisoners such as deportation, repatriation, and transfers of licence to Ireland on release. We closely monitor the development of policy and practice in relation to these issues. If you think your particular problem doesn't fit these categories, don't let that stop you getting in touch. We try to be flexible and creative when it comes to helping prisoners with their problems.

## Appeals

Starting with convictions from Magistrate's Court, it is possible (in theory at least) to appeal your case all the way up to the Supreme Court.

## The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC)

The CCRC's job is to review the sentences and convictions of prisoners who have been refused leave or had their appeals turned down. It has the power to refer cases back to the appropriate appeal court **where there is a real possibility of the conviction being overturned**. The process is lengthy due to the number of cases and the CCRC's limited financial resources.

## The European Courts

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of the EC can offer alternative approaches to a prisoner. It's worth remembering, however, that even though their decisions carry weight they are not binding on the UK courts.

## What Can I do if the police want to speak to me in prison?

You are entitled to consult a solicitor if you are contacted by the police while in prison. There may be a number of reasons why the police want to speak to you. One example is that they may want to conduct an interview under caution regarding a criminal offence. Such interviews may take place in the prison but the same rules and procedures apply as to those in a police station. Your solicitor can liaise with the police on your behalf to find out why they want to speak to you and can represent you by providing legal advice on the law and interview options, and be present in the interview to ensure that the correct procedures are observed.

## A few words on lawyers...

The right to legal representation is a fundamental human right for everyone. Many prisoners complain that they have difficulty getting in touch with their legal representatives. Contact us if your lawyer is not responding to your letters or calls and we will make further enquiries on your behalf. Solicitors are no different to plumbers or car mechanics: if you don't ask them the right questions, it's unlikely you'll get the answers you want. Always prepare a list of questions and make sure your legal representative answers them to your satisfaction.



## Maintaining Innocence and Appeals

Maintaining innocence in prison can be a lonely and often discouraging experience. While the official line from the prison, the probation service and the courts is that it would be unlawful to refuse parole on grounds of maintaining innocence, the system operates on the basic assumption that all convictions are sound and all prisoners must therefore be considered guilty.

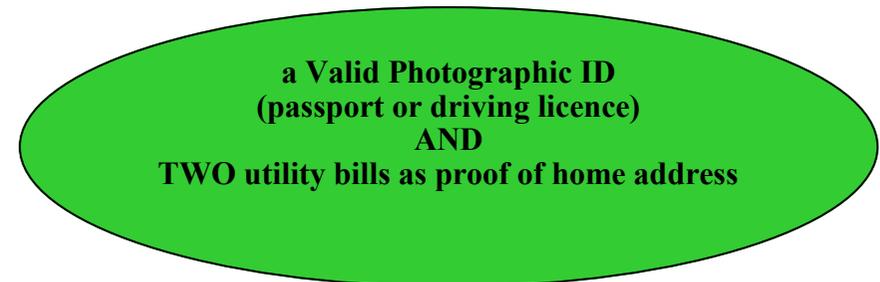
The Prison system doesn't say that those maintaining innocence are discriminated against; it merely prevents prisoners from progressing because of their refusal to do the offence-related coursework required to progress them through the system. For inmates on IPP sentences, that could mean prison for the rest of their natural lives. If you are maintaining innocence, we can put you in touch with organisations and groups like the **UK Innocence Project** and **Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI)**. See *Useful Contacts pages*.

## PRISON LIFE AND YOUR RIGHTS

### Visits

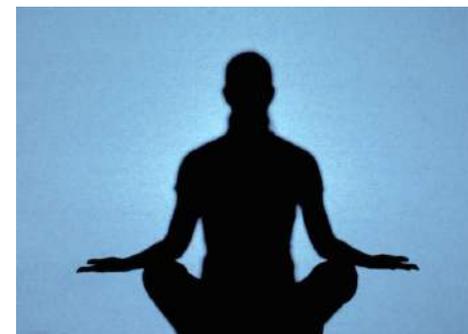
The number of visits you are permitted is normally based on your Incentive Level. You receive a maximum of three one hour-long visits every 28 days (more for prisoners on remand). Prisons differ in how they organise and who can organise booking visits. So we strongly advise checking these details to avoid confusion and disappointment. All prisons will demand that visitors show a valid photographic ID (passport or driving licence) and **TWO** utility bills as proof of home address (mobile bills are not accepted).

**Visitors without these documents will be refused entry.**



### Exercise

Subject to good and weather entitled to spend at every day exercising



order and discipline permitting, you are least one hour of in the open air.

## Telephone calls

You are not permitted to receive phone calls, but you can make calls during association periods. You have to complete a form selecting telephone numbers for family, friends and legal contacts, and this list has to be approved. The phone calls work on a credit system and you will receive a PIN (Personal Identification Number) account for your exclusive use. You can purchase credit and the cost of phone calls made is deducted from your PIN account.

Outside of conversations with your health provider, lawyer or the Samaritans (and some others), you have no privacy in telephone communications from prison. For security reasons, your calls will be recorded and many will be monitored. The prison may curtail your phone use for a disciplinary issue. If you are registered within the prison as an Irish national, you are legally entitled to one short phone call to a family member every month at the prison's expense, if you have not had a domestic visit in that time.



## Letters and Censorship

When you first arrive in the prison you will be given a free first class letter, then one free second class letter every week afterwards. Other letters must be paid for. Stamps and stationery are available to purchase from the canteen. There is no restriction on the amount of mail you can receive. Most mail is opened for censorship purposes apart from legal mail. General items of property must be bought through the prison shop and some items can be posted in, but these are very limited and vary from prison to prison.

## What is the Parole Board?

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can be safely released into the community. It is empowered to direct release if it is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner be confined.

## Can I be released on Life Licence?

Yes, but it involves a set of probationary conditions that you must follow on release. Even after these conditions have been satisfied, you will still be subject to recall for the rest of your life. It is also worth noting that these licence conditions are subject to judicial review which means they can be challenged in the courts with legal assistance.



## I was turned down at the parole hearing, so what happens now?

This decision is subject to Judicial Review which means it can be challenged in the Courts. Otherwise, the Secretary of State sets a date for another review which should take place no later than two years after the previous hearing.

## What is Home Detention Curfew?

Home Detention Curfew (HDC) hopes to enable a managed transition to the community, providing some structure as you leave prison and re-integrate into society. You would have to be considered low risk to be eligible for early release by the prison governor.

HDC applies to those who are serving sentences of between three months and four years, and allows you to live at an approved address in the community, subject to tagging and curfew restrictions. You must sign a licence which tells the times you will have to remain at your home address or hostel: normally, 7pm to 7am. If you break your curfew, you may be recalled to prison where you will stay until your automatic release date. HDC is not an entitlement and can only be granted subject to you meeting the eligibility criteria and passing a risk assessment, including a home circumstances check. This **excludes** those convicted for any sexual offence, cruelty to children, or racially aggravated offences. HDC does not operate in Northern Ireland.



## How many letters can I write?

A convicted prisoner is entitled to write one letter per week with postage paid by the prison, known as the 'Statutory letter'. A convicted prisoner can also write at least one 'privilege' letter per week, which he or she pays for themselves. You can have your privilege letters withdrawn for disciplinary reasons, but the prison can never withdraw your right to a statutory letter. Generally there are no restrictions when writing to solicitors.

## Can the prison open all my mail?

Mail is censored in Category A and dispersal prisons, particularly those housing high-risk prisoners. Mail for people convicted of sexual offences against children may also be opened.



## What is 'Rule 39' and when does it apply?

Rule 39 and YOI Rule 14 are designed to ensure confidentiality of legal communication for a prisoner. Only mark your envelopes 'Rule 39' when you are writing to your legal representative, the Courts or the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). **Do not mark letters to the ICPO with Rule 39 or Rule 14 as we are not a legal organisation.** Writing Rule 39 on letters to ICPO will make it more difficult for us to advocate on your behalf.

## When can the prison authorities open Rule 39 letters?

The prison authorities can still open Rule 39 correspondence if they have reason to believe there is something suspect contained in the communication. This decision has to be sanctioned by an operational manager and the mail must always be opened in the prisoner's presence.



## General Application, Complaints and Discipline

A **General Application "APP"** is a document which can be found on the wing. It has sections which allows it to be used for:

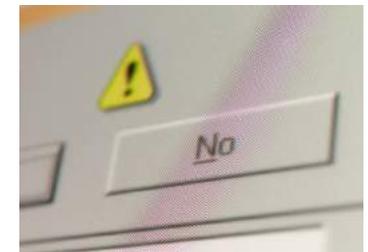
- requests for most things from VOs to musical instruments
- making a formal complaint (inform your lawyer of your intentions)
- appealing against discipline procedures / adjudication (inform your lawyer).

## What is Bail?

Bail is the term used when a person charged with a criminal offence is released from police custody until he/she appears in court or at the police station. If the police are confident the defendant will show up at court and not be a threat to the public in the meantime, they will generally grant bail, subject to certain conditions, and the defendant will be bailed until the court hearing date.

## You can only appeal if you have pleaded 'not guilty.'

An appeal from the Magistrate's court generally takes the form of a re-hearing at Crown Court. The Crown Court has the power to quash a conviction, but it also has the discretion to increase the sentence given at the Magistrates. If you are not happy with the Crown Court decision to uphold your conviction, you have a number of options in the High Court.



## What is a Judicial Review?

A defendant can appeal for Judicial Review if it can be argued that the Magistrate's Court acted outside its powers or there was some procedural unfairness in the trial. An application for a High Court judicial review must be filed within three months of the Magistrate Court's decision.

The judicial power of the House of Lords was replaced by the Supreme Court in October 2009 as the highest court in the land, and it is here you would come if you were unsuccessful in the High Court. The Supreme Court, however, only hears appeals from the High Court in very exceptional circumstances such as where there are important points of law or some kind of public importance attached to the case.

## Magistrate's convictions

If you want to appeal a conviction from the Magistrate's court, notice of appeal needs to be submitted by your legal representative **within 21 days** of sentencing.

## Crown Court Convictions

To appeal a Crown conviction to the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division), you first need leave to appeal and this is not automatic.

A Notice and Grounds of Appeal or Application for Permission to Appeal (**Form NG**) must be submitted to the Crown Court **within 28 days** of conviction. (If an application is submitted after the 28-day deadline, you or your lawyer needs to provide detailed reasons).



This application goes to the Criminal Appeal Office and the process of putting together all the relevant papers is carried out by their casework section. It is then sent to a **Single Judge** who will decide whether or not to grant leave to appeal. If leave is granted, a date is set and the case will be heard by the **Full Court**, (usually consisting of three judges). If the Single Judge refuses leave to appeal, you have 14 days to renew the application before the Full Court. The success rate for getting leave to appeal to the CACD is not particularly encouraging.

## Counselling

A number of organisations work with the prison service, such as Carats, which stands for Counselling, Assessment Referral, Advice and Throughcare. The Prison Phoenix Trust also offer similar services. These organisations exist as part of the drug treatment programmes. They provide:

- advice, guidance, referral
- basic information on issues surrounding drug misuse and advice on the ways in which offenders can help remove it from their lives
- one-to-one support and group work
- mediate between specialist care (such as Drug Rehabilitation Programmes and External Drugs Intervention Teams) and drug abusers



## What is OASYS?

OASys is the new national system jointly designed by the Prison Service and the Probation Service for assessing the risk and needs of the offender. It is designed to be an integral part of the work which practitioners do in assessing offenders; identifying the risks they pose, deciding how to minimise those risks and how to tackle offending behaviour effectively.

## What is OMU?

OMU (Offender Management Unit) is the prison and probation working together on your sentence plan with the aim of reducing both the risk of harm presented to others and the likelihood of reoffending.

## Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

There are four types of ROTL:

- resettlement day release
- resettlement overnight release
- childcare resettlement
- and special purpose

On receipt of an application for ROTL for which a prisoner is eligible, the prison must carry out a risk assessment. The following categories of prisoners are not eligible for ROTL:

- category A prisoners
- prisoners on the escape list
- those subject to extradition proceedings
- remand and convicted un-sentenced prisoners
- and prisoners remanded for further charges or further sentencing

All prisons should have a guidance leaflet available explaining who is eligible, the conditions attached, and how to apply.

## Can I transfer my Licence to Ireland?

Yes it is possible for you to transfer and serve the terms and conditions of your licence back in Ireland. It is not, however, a straightforward process. Both Probation services (UK and Ireland) have to agree the terms and conditions, etc. In most cases you will have to serve out your licence in England or Wales. We recommend that you inform your probation officer and offender manager of your intentions **as soon as possible**.

**WARNING:** There are consequences of leaving the UK without permission while still on licence. You **WILL** be arrested as soon as you arrive back in the UK no matter how long it is after you leave.

## IPPs/Deportation/Repatriation/Ters/Ers

As from 5 December 2012, **IPP (Indeterminate Public Protection) sentences** are no longer being issued. They have been replaced by determinate, fixed sentences. However, the new sentence plan is not retrospective and will not apply to anyone currently on an IPP sentence. If you are serving an IPP sentence you will continue to serve that sentence in the normal way and your release will be the responsibility of the Parole Board. The same applies if you are over tariff on an IPP sentence; it will be the responsibility of the Parole Board to release you.

**The British authorities have no problem with prisoners on IPP sentences being repatriated to Ireland.**



The new **European Prisoner Transfer Agreements** which make repatriation compulsory for foreign national prisoners will **NOT** apply to Irish prisoners. The British have decided not to implement this in relation to Irish nationals. Repatriation for Irish nationals will be a purely voluntary process.

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As for the **Tariff Expiry Release Scheme (TERS)**, prisoners can only be removed if they are first subject to deportation. Prisoners who have not been issued with a Deportation Order do not qualify for either TERS or the **Early Release Scheme (ERS)**. These schemes do **NOT** apply to Irish nationals because of the agreement between the British and Irish governments in February 2007, not to deport Irish nationals from the UK. The only way in which an Irish national can now be moved back to Ireland is by **voluntary repatriation**.

## Can I be repatriated?

Currently (Oct 2017) ALL REPATRIATION APPLICATIONS are ON HOLD.

The Council of Europe Convention on **the Transfer of Sentenced Persons** was ratified by Ireland in 1995. The Convention sets out conditions which must be fulfilled if a transfer is to be affected. However, even where all of the conditions are satisfied, there is no obligation on the State to comply with a transfer request.

A number of important factors are also be taken into consideration before you apply for repatriation. YOU MUST....

- have exhausted all legal appeals in the UK
- have strong family ties with Ireland; a partner and children, parents, living there. (not only brothers and sisters!)



The repatriation process is a lengthy one and can take up to 2 years to process. The paperwork in the UK and in Ireland can be painstakingly slow. Checks by the Irish authorities into the strength of family ties must be completed. In the UK, the prison remission rate is 50% of sentence as against 75% in Ireland. PLEASE SEE OUR NEWSLETTER FOR CONSTANT UPDATES.

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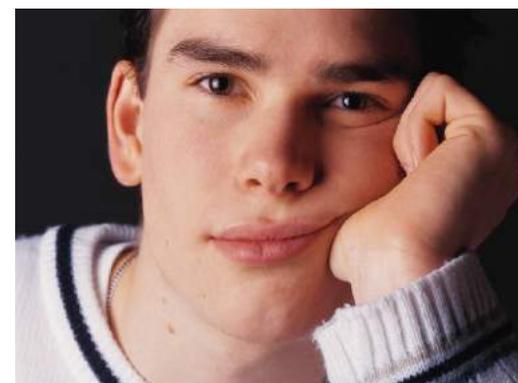
If successful, you have no say regarding which prison you are sent to. The ICPO can only monitor the progress of your application. However, we must point out that we have no influence in speeding up the process. No amount of support from TDs or MPs will do so either. The process moves at its own pace and we are powerless to do anything about this. If you wish to apply for repatriation, contact the ICPO for the necessary forms, literature, etc.

## HEALTH IN PRISON

### Good mental health

Being held in prison can have a huge impact on your physical and mental well-being.

One of the toughest things for many about imprisonment is coping with boredom. Many struggle with the long hours with nothing to do and little opportunity for exercise or recreation. Add to this the isolation of being far from home, living in cramped conditions with little privacy, and possibly facing a long sentence. Under these conditions it is easy to get depressed or to suffer from stress. The best favour you can do yourself is to try to make the best of things, difficult as they may seem. Think positively, stay mentally strong and take care of yourself. Try not to dwell on the past and what has brought you there; accept life as it is and take it one day at a time.



### General Medical Care

The overall standard of medical care in prison will vary. Your medical records are checked by the prison healthcare officers on your arrival. Should you develop other symptoms or have difficulty in obtaining your medication, contact the healthcare unit in the prison. The ICPO is always willing to contact the prison healthcare on your behalf.

## The Prison Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy can play a very important role in your wellbeing. Arrest and reception can be traumatic and dehumanising experiences. Most people in prison need help in coping. Different issues present themselves: identity, companionship, restrictions, guilt and worry about family, anxieties and fears.

The Chaplaincy team recognise this, and by means of prayer, liturgical services, and informal contact on the wings, seek to offer support and help. Many find meaning and a new sense of direction in life through the help and support of the Chaplaincy.



## Travellers in Prison

Working with ICPO, the Irish Chaplaincy - Traveller Equality Project (52 Camden Square NW1 9XB) supports Irish Travellers in prison. We encourage you to

- register as a Traveller using the W3 code so that your specific needs are better recognised and catered for
- join or begin a Traveller support groups
- become a Traveller representative

Our research report, “Voices Unheard”, published in June 2011, showed how Travellers are experiencing life in prison in England & Wales. Poor levels of literacy, mental health issues, limited access to services, discrimination and prejudicial licence conditions for release, disproportionately affect Traveller prisoners. We have made a series of recommendations for effective monitoring of needs and sharing of resources for Irish Travellers in prison. If you come from a Traveller background, please feel free to contact our Traveller Project (see back page for contact details). Check if your prison has a Traveller Representative.

## Can I be deported?

The short answer is NO. Since April 2006, all nationals from the European Economic Area (EEA) countries who have received custodial sentences of 2 years or more, have been considered for deportation. However, in a parliamentary statement on 19 February 2007, Liz Homer, Director General of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), stated that because of the close historical, community and political ties between the UK and Ireland, Irish nationals would not be considered for deportation except in very exceptional circumstances. Prisoners in receipt of letters from the UK Border Agency threatening deportation should contact the ICPO for advice and support, but not be unduly stressed by such a letter.



## Can ICPO help with Transfers?

Prison transfers in England and Wales are a security matter for the Prison Service and as such there is little the ICPO can do. However, we can write to the prison governor in support of your wish to be transferred to another prison highlighting compassionate reasons such as nearness to family, or illness of a parent, etc. The problem of prison transfers has been greatly complicated in recent years due to the dramatic increase in the prison population.

Transfers to prisons in **Northern Ireland** are more problematic. There are currently three prisons operating there: Maghaberry and Magilligan, and Hydebank Wood (YOI and Female) and all are usually full. Also, priority is given to those with habitual residency in Northern Ireland.