FAMILY INFORMATION BOOKLET FOR PEOPLE IN OUR CUSTODY

Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann
Irish Prison Service

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Introduction

Our lives have changed dramatically over recent months because of the spread of COVID-19. We have experienced the challenges of adhering to the Government restrictions and public health advice over this time. I appreciate that the challenges can appear all the greater when you have a relative/friend in prison. Not only must you face these challenges alone possibly, but it is also understandable that you will worry for their health and safety while they are in our custody.

Like other public service providers, the Irish Prison Service (IPS) has to make very difficult decisions about lifting the restrictions and returning to the 'new normal'. Similar to Residential Care Facilities, prisons are highly vulnerable to clusters of infection. As a result, we are taking great care in how and when we lift our restrictions and how we operate our prisons over the coming months. We are committed to the continued protection of our prisoners from any further risk of exposure to the virus. While we have been successful to date, we must not become complacent or take unnecessary risks during this transition period. We ask for your continued support as we slowly remove the restrictions and re-open our prisons.

This booklet outlines the measures we have taken to protect the people in our custody and the changes which you can expect to hear about and perhaps see when you re-enter the prison for a visit.

On behalf of the Governors and staff in each of our prisons, I want to thank you for your patience and understanding. I would also like to express my thanks to our Governors and all our staff across the organisation for their commitment and support in keeping the people in our custody safe and healthy during the restrictions. I encourage you to convey your thanks to them as you pass through the security screening area when we re-open for visits.

Prisons are large communities, like villages and towns. Our success in keeping the virus out of the prison to date would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of our community residents, the people in our custody. I would also like to express my thanks to all of them for their patience and compliance with new rules, regulations and regimes which we had to impose over the last 3 months. I would appreciate if you, as their close family and friends, could convey my thanks to them, on my behalf.

While I know that some of our decisions have had a significant impact on the families of those in our care, I am committed to working with our partners in the voluntary and community sector to support both you and your loved one in prison in the best way I can.
I hope you will find the information in this booklet helpful.

Caron McCaffrey
Director General

Section 1 Video Calls

How to keep in contact with a relative/friend in custody

Physical visits to prison were suspended and have been replaced by video calls due to Covid-19. Video phones for the purpose of video calls have been installed in all locations across the prison estate and are now operational. While our video phones help to keep relatives/friends in contact the amount of visits that can take place on a daily basis is lower than would normally happen with physical visits to prisons.

As a result, we needed to change the process for arranging a video call and reduce significantly the number of visitors a person in custody can have. Due to the limitations on the number of video call slots, it is no longer possible for relatives/friends to book the visit. Under the new arrangements, the prisoner must identify a visitor and the prison staff will arrange for the visitor to be notified by email of the date and time of the video call and how to access the video call on the day. “How to guides” are published below to help you through this process. It is also important to remember that the video calls automatically cuts off after 15 minutes.

There are two main ways we suggest you contact your relative/friend:

1. Video calls Please see our website for further details on Video Calls

2. Physical Visit in person (from July 20) Please see our website for further details on Physical Visits

Let us look at how you should prepare to do each of these in turn, so you will be ready to talk online or, face-to-face with your relative/friend.

Video Calls

To help you keep in touch, we introduced a family video call service in early April 2020. This allows people in our custody to communicate with a nominated relative/friend by video call (video and audio) similar to FaceTime, Skype or Zoom.
At first, there were some technical difficulties, but now we are pleased to tell you it works well. That said, like any video calling software, the quality of the call depends on having good broadband speed and a Wi-Fi signal and a compatible smart phone or computer.

How to join a call successfully

Step 1: Prepare well in advance before the call

Try to contact the Prison Visits Booking Office if the call time does not suit you. They may be able to change the call time, depending on availability.

Decide in advance who you want to take part the call e.g. yourself, other family, or family and friends. Perhaps discuss this with the person in custody over a phone call before the video call.

Make sure you have good broadband speed and a good Wi-Fi connection.

Make sure your phone software is up to date. For IPhones, use Safari and for other devices use Chrome as the Web Browser.

Helpful guides to using video calls

For more information on,

- How to connect
- How to change your web browser
- How to trouble shoot

Is available on the Irish Prison Service webpage here. These guides are available in Arabic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Vietnamese.

Having trouble with your device, Call our Helpdesk

If you are experiencing difficulties connecting to a video call, contact our helpdesk on 043 3335397. It is open from 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday.

Decide beforehand if you want to give everyone a chance to talk for a number of minutes or have an open conversation. Engaging in an open conversation may result in one family member dominating the time, which limits the opportunity for others to engage.

Step 2: Be prepared on the day of the call

Decide where you are going to make the call from – and the background (sounds etc). Decide what you want your relative/friend to see in the background of the video call. If they are serving a long sentence, they can often become distracted by seeing pets, the garden, renovations, new furniture, and/or pictures.

It can be hard for your relative/friend to talk easily in this situation so chatting about a new painting or a pet can help. However, if you want to have a serious conversation with the person, consider a neutral background before starting a video call. Otherwise it may cause conflict or even distract them from what you want to talk about. Log in 5-10 minutes before the scheduled meeting time (the time of the meeting is stated in your email).

For the call to activate, click **"Join Call"**. Tip: the video and audio on the call will not become active until the start time commences. An example, your call is at 4pm, then you can only join the call at 4pm. Remember to log in 5-10 minutes before though as you don't want to waste time!

Step 3: Talking with your relatives or friends

Make it easy for the person in custody to have a chat using the following suggestions. It can be hard to talk at will. Help each other out, you could asks

- To tell a story
- Sing a song
- Play a game
- Tell a joke

In order to take pressure off everyone.

What are the advantages of video calls?

Talking to someone on a screen is different than talking to someone face to face. Using Video Calls has the following advantages for you:

Saves time, cost and effort involved in traveling to the prison, particularly for children, elderly and people suffering from ill health.

Provides children with the opportunity to see and talk to a parent/relative or friend from the comfort and security of their own home environment without having to enter a prison.

Avoids the need to explain to a child where the parent/relative or friend is currently living. Provides opportunities to for children to demonstrate activities or tasks, which could not be performed in a visiting area.

Provides opportunities to show changes to a home e.g.

- Renovations
- A new pet
- New furniture
- The garden, etc.

The advantages for people in custody include:

- Provides the opportunity to see family and friends in the comfort and security of their own home environment.
- Provides people in custody an insight into changes in the outside world e.g. pets, home renovations, etc.
- Reduces the stress of worrying about family entering the prison.

<u>Please remember</u>:

In the interests of child protection, we cannot facilitate family video calls with children (under 18 years of age) without parental supervision.

Given the risks of human contact spreading the coronavirus, all of our visits will be screened. This means that there will no human contact during your visit. Failure to follow this instruction you will be asked to leave the prison and your visit will be terminated.

The posting video calls to social media is a breach of data protection regulations, which may result in future video calls being revoked (cancelled).

Section 2 Physical Visits

The Prison Service on the 23 June 2020 outlined plans for a phased recommencement of physical visits to prisons starting on Monday 20th July 2020. We fully appreciate how important contact with family/friend are to people in our custody and we are committed to the early return of physical visits as soon as it is considered safe to do so.

In line with the Government Roadmap, and with infection control in mind, the service has completed a comprehensive risk assessment on the return of physical prison visits. The Service has identified the necessary measures, which are currently being processed, to ensure that family members and friends can return to physical visits to our prisons in a safe manner.

Visits will recommence on a phased basis and movement through the phases will be subject to ongoing risk assessment and will take account of public health advice, the range of Government restrictions in place and other factors including the prevailing transmission rate in the community.

Summary of Phases

Phase 1 – Return of Physical Visits (20 July 2020)

- Physical visits will recommence with effect from Monday 20th July 2020.
- All prisoners will be entitled to receive **one physical visit per fortnight**, of not more than 15 minutes duration.
- Prisoners may opt for two video visits if preferred.
- Physical visits during this phase will be limited to **one adult person** (over 18 years of age).
- Prisoners will also be able to avail of one video visit of not more than 15 minutes duration per fortnight.
- In order to prevent the potential spread of infection all visits will be behind Perspex screens and visitors will be required to wear a face covering at all times.
- No physical contact between prisoners and family members will be permitted.

Phase 2 – Monday 17th August 2020

- All prisoners will be entitled to receive **one physical family visit per fortnight**, of not more than 15 minutes duration.
- Physical visits during this phase will be **limited to two people** of which one visitor may be a child.
- Prisoners may continue to avail of one video visit per fortnight of not more than 15 minutes
- Prisoners may continue to opt to receive a video visit in lieu of a physical visit
- Visitors will continue to be required to wear a face covering
- In order to prevent the potential spread of infection all visits will be behind Perspex screens and visitors will be required to wear a face covering at all times
- No physical contact between prisoners and family members will be permitted.

The operation and frequency of visits will be kept under ongoing review guided both by Public Health advice and a desire to support as much contact as possible between people in custody and their relatives/friend. Detailed information for relatives/friends in relation to the operation of visits will be published on the Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie in the coming weeks.

What do I need to know before my physical visit?

- Visitors to prison are not permitted to wear their own personal facemask. All visitors will be provided with a new facemask on entry to the prison and will be required to wear it for the duration of the visit. Failure to comply may result in your visit being suspended and you will be asked to leave the prison.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available when you enter the prison and before you enter the visiting room.
- In order to prevent the potential spread of infection all visits will be behind Perspex screens and visitors will be required to wear a face covering at all times.
- No physical contact between you and the person in custody will be permitted.

Will there be security screening?

Yes, security screening will be in full operation for visitors entering our closed prisons. Airport style walk through detectors and X-ray scanners are installed in each closed prison. The Canine Unit includes passive and active search dogs (sniffer dogs' or drug dogs) Irish Prison Service have enhanced the fight against trafficking by the introduction of drug swabbing similar to airport style swabbing for drug residues. Drug-swabbing machines will be present and all visitors will be tested before you can enter the visiting room.

You will not be allowed to enter our prisons if you are carrying any of following items:

- Mobile phones and chargers,
- Any item which could be used as a weapon, particularly sharp items,
- Drugs, prescription drugs.

Overdose Warning

Overdose is now the main threat facing your loved ones in Prison. We need your help to keep them safe. During the past few weeks your loved one may have stopped using or reduced their drug use. As a result they will have **lower tolerance levels**. There is a huge risk of them overdosing if they start using again.

Ways you can help save their life:

- **The best thing to consider is saying no!**

Help him/her by saying no. Make an excuse, do what you have to do before it's too late.

- **Encourage them to seek help.**

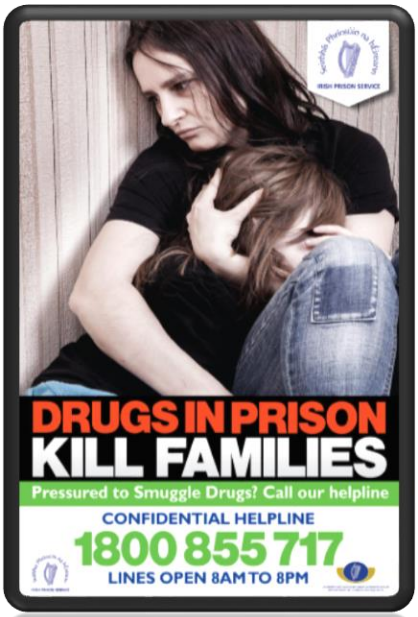
There is support available in all prisons for people struggling with addiction. Encourage them to avail of this support.

- **Don't risk being arrested or imprisoned yourself.**

There are searches and sniffer dogs at all prison entrances. Think of your family and how this may impact them if you are caught.

We realise this is a difficult time for you and your family. We know that sometimes you may feel under pressure to bring drugs into prison. The risk is too great. It can be fatal. Do the right thing, for them, you and your family.

The Operational Support Group (OSG) has a confidential helpline set up if you have any concerns or feeling under pressure to smuggle drugs. The number is 1800 855 717 and is open from 8am-8pm.



What can I do to reduce delays?

To speed up the security screening process and reduce the amount of contact points with our security staff, where possible leave the following items outside the prison:

- Jewellery,
- Belts,
- Watches,
- Other possessions which contain metal
- Prescription drugs.

Will I need a health screening when I visit?

Yes, you will also need to have a health screen check before you can enter the prison. Everyone entering a prison must be health screened and temperature checked before you enter.

Here is how it works:

You will be asked to a number of health screening questions to identify potential risk factors for Covid-19 infection. Please note that the questions you will be asked change regularly.

Please answer the questions honestly. We will check your temperature using a calibrated thermal scanner like the one in the picture above. If you answer yes to certain questions, or if your temperature is 37.5 degrees Celsius or above when measured, you will not be allowed to enter the prison and you will be advised to seek medical advice. Our screening does not diagnose Covid-19 or any other illness. It is an infection control measure only.

Please do not argue the result of the test. We screen every person who enters and it is a critical factor in identifying people who may be at risk of carrying the virus. If you fail the temperature check or health screening process, you may also need to consult your doctor.

What happens the information you give for health screening?

The information we get from screening you directly (using a questionnaire and a temperature check) is protected under data protection GDPR. We collect answers to our questionnaire in a discreet manner in an area that will allow for maximum possible confidentiality of your answers. We do not keep records of your screening answers or your temperature check once the screening is completed. Staff performing screening may be interviewed as part of a contact tracing activity and may share information about you that they recall for the purposes of supporting that public health function. Further information on the protection of the data provided by you during this process is available on the Irish Prison Service webpage.

Will there be delays when I visit?
Yes, unfortunately, there will. Please expect them. The introduction of temperature checking and health screening, combined with social distancing is likely to lead to delays in entering the prison, which may mean you to have to queue outdoors for a short period.

Please arrive in plenty of time to reduce the risk of a delay interfering with your scheduled visit time.

Please bring a rain jacket and umbrella to protect yourself from the weather.

Can I send money to my relative/friend in prison?
No, you can no longer send cash directly and we ask you not to send postal orders, as this process is currently phasing out. Visitors will no longer be allowed to present cash into prisons nor will cash be available for people in custody to provide to visitors.

There are now 3 convenient ways for funds to be provided to people in Prison;

Option 1: By Cash or Debit Card in any Post Office in the State with An Post BillPay Card. Your relative in prison must fill in a form authorising the Irish Prison Service to send one person a BillPay card. Once you receive the BillPay Card – you can call in to any Post Office in the state, hand the BillPay Card in at the counter and provide funds by way of cash or debit card.

You will be given a receipt, which you should keep as proof of payment. The maximum transaction is €200. The Card can be shared by family members to send funds.

Option 2: By Debit Card via www.bills.ie with An Post Billpay Card. If you have received the An Post BillPay Card, you can use the website www.mybills.ie to make a payment by debit card. Payments made by 11pm will ordinarily be in the person in

custody's account the next day. The maximum transaction is €200. You will receive an emailed receipt which you should keep as proof of payment.

Option 3: By Bank Transfer from your Bank Account. You can do this by using your Banking Online facility, Banking App on a computer, laptop, IPAD, mobile phone or other such devices or by calling into your Bank.

Maximum amount.

The maximum transaction is €200 and any payment in excess of €200 will be returned.

Correct details

The Prisoner ID Number must be correctly entered into the reference box or the person in custody's account cannot receive the funds.

Where can I get further information about sending money

General Queries Irish Prison Service Website – www.irishprisons.ie
For individual queries, please email PAMSCash@irishprisons.ie

Disclaimer:

Irish Prison Service bears no responsibility for errors made in the completion of bank transfers - incorrect details entered on a bank transfer means that the person in custody's account cannot be updated.

Timeframes:

Irish Prison Service makes every effort to ensure funds are transferred to the person in custody's IPS account as soon as possible after payment is received. However, this is subject to Banking/An Post ICT systems and opening hours for the processing of such transactions. All payments will usually be in the person in custody's account within 2 to 5 working days

Section 3 Prison Routine and Regimes

We are trying to keep a positive routine and focus for those in our custody, in line with good practice. For people in our custody, their behaviour and engagement with services still dictates the level of privileges they receive in relation to,

- Gratuity
- Quality of accommodation
- Facilities
- Contact with the outside world including phone calls, video calls or physical visits

This is called Incentivised Regimes. For more information of the Incentivised Regimes Policy, please visit our website here.

How do staff share information about Covid-19 with people in custody?

COVID 19
Prisoner Information
Friday, 27 March 2020 (Edition 2) Irish Prison Service
WE NEED YOU
Here is this week's update
Let's stick together, by keeping apart
Update on Visits
Unfortunetly, Personal visits have been suspended from Saturday 28th March to prevent spread of the virus and keep you and your families safe.
The Prison Service is doing its best to introduce as soon as possible a new way for you to stay in touch with your families
What you can do to stay Safe
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Our staff take their responsibility to share Covid-19 information with the people in our custody extremely seriously. They do this work:

- verbally providing Information about handwashing techniques, organising demonstrations by Red Cross staff and volunteers, putting up HSE posters about Covid 19 where people in custody can see them.
- Using distancing tapes on floors, the same as you would see in your community.

To share the latest information about Covid19 and changes in prisons, we also have meetings with prisoner groups (focus groups). We send weekly 'Covid19 Prisoner Information Newsletter to everybody in custody direct to their cell by Red Cross volunteers (a person in custody). The newsletters are weekly and they are delivered to every cell by the Red Cross Volunteers.

Similar to outside prisons, for their own protection, some people in custody are cocooning, in isolation or in quarantine. For those people, we drafted a newsletter fortnightly for those people called 'Living in Cell Newsletter. These newsletters are also delivered to the relevant cells by the Red Cross Volunteers.

Both newsletters included information from Red Cross, Teachers, Psychology, Healthcare, Association for Social Inclusion Ireland (IASIO) and Merchant's Quay Ireland (MQI) – all of who work in prisons with the Irish Prison Service to support people in custody.

Each of the newsletters is four pages long. We work to make them both useful and attractive so we include fun information, pieces with educational value, crosswords, puzzles and sometimes a joke.

We consider literacy and language barriers to understanding information by using visuals and using clear language to communicate messages in all communications, including the newsletters. We use translators to translate the newsletters into various languages, and they are given out to different nationalities we have in our custody. Both newsletters are continuing during the summer months but are both issued fortnightly from end June. The intention is to keep people in custody informed of the latest information relating to COVID-19. A lot of effort goes into the editing of these newsletters to try to ensure that the content is just right. We would like to express our thanks to our Red Cross volunteers in particular for all of their hard work and effort in continuing to deliver those newsletters to cells during this time.

Do people in custody still take part in work & training?

Yes, some do. Essential workers such as those working in the kitchen, laundry, waste management and industrial cleaning areas have continued in their jobs. Workers continue to receive the most up-to-date information and guidance on how to keep safe and well in addition to the usual health and safety measures.

Social distancing guidelines have meant that in non-essential workshop areas the number of people that can attend activities have been reduced. In some cases the workshop activity, has been suspended where social distancing is not possible. For more information on work training programmes, visit our website here.

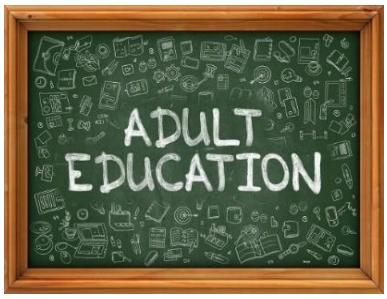
How do people in our custody keep active?

All people in custody have access to gyms and they can use these or exercise in their cell.

Gym areas are open on a reduced basis with a rota to ensure social distancing.

Access to outside areas such as yards are also available.

Do people in custody have access to education services?



Formal prison education services have been closed from 13 March 2020. However, teachers in prisons have continued to provide educational services to students in custody so that both accredited and non-accredited learning has been uninterrupted during the Covid19 pandemic. Their work includes supplying educational resources (books, arts supplies and printouts), which were delivered by Red Cross Volunteers to students in their cells.

Students in prison completing Open University (OU), where approved by the Governor, were provided with in-cell laptops to complete their assignments. Open University extended deadlines for assignments and some exams were postponed, where possible.

We made every effort to help students complete their courses by June 2020. If only one Open University assignment was incomplete due to Covid19, a Special Circumstances Form was completed so those students can progress to the next part of their degree. Where more than one assignment was incomplete, they were deferred and students can complete any remaining assignments from September, the assignments completed are “banked”.

The students completing Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) courses have been completing those assignments in cell, with the support of their teachers. As in the community, Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate State exams are available to be completed by students in prison schools. Teachers in prisons are completing calculated grades in June 2020 for their students who were registered for the Leaving Certificate State Exam in June 2020. Leaving Certificate students will also be offered an opportunity to sit the exams in September or whenever advised by the Government that it is safe to do so.

Same as outside prisons, it is intended that adult learners will be given the opportunity to take their final Junior Cycle examinations in autumn 2020. The exam dates will be decided by the Department of Education and Skills.

We hope to open prison schools in September 2020, if public health advice allows. Teaching staff, together with Psychology staff have designed and provided five Games Volumes and a range of Distraction booklets (approx. 120 pages each) which contain a range of supportive activities from puzzles and crosswords. These booklets also include physical exercise routines and information about mindfulness, health and well-being. Stationery supplies such as A4 writing pads and pens for students to continue with creative writing and to use these resources to write to loved ones during this time are bought by Education admin staff and delivered to the prisons. These are given to people in their cells by the Red Cross Volunteers. People sharing cells have been asked not to share educational materials or resources (including pens, pencils or books) at this time, due to Covid19. Similar to what has happened in the community stress balls have been given to people in custody who are cocooning. People over 70 years of age in the community have found them useful for relieving stress at this time. For more information on our education services, click here. If you have any queries about education in prisons, you can email education@irishprisons.ie

Is there a library service in prisons?

Yes, there are libraries in all of the prisons. People in custody who ask for library books have been given them in their cells.

For hygiene reasons, we do not re-distribute books or other library materials until at least 72 hours (about three full days and nights) after they are returned to the library.

For more information on our library service click here.

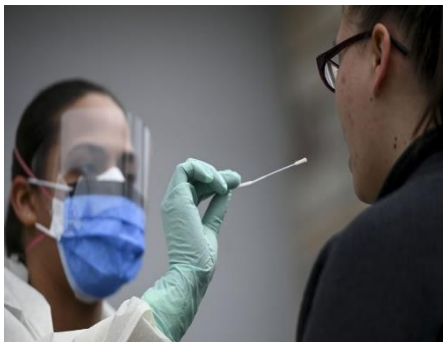
Do people in custody have the option to do Art in prison?

Yes, there are opportunities to do art in prison. You can buy people in custody Art supplies (like colouring pencils, colouring books, including mindfulness colouring and art packs) and we will deliver the supplies to their cells. This can help keep inmates creative during the pandemic.

Do people in custody have a TV in their cell during COVID-19?

Yes, we have provided an extra TV channel and it has been rolled out across all prisons to show Netflix series on a scheduled basis. The Irish Prison Service are also planning to extend pilot TV services that are working at present in Mountjoy, Midlands and Limerick Prison to broadcast information, education and support services that are of interest to people in custody. This channel will also include health information during Covid19.

Section 4: Healthcare in prisons



In helping to preventing the spread of the coronavirus. Our healthcare team have been extremely busy over the last 3 months. They have continued to maintain the standard of care which people in our custody have come to expect, while also looking after those who have been quarantined and cocooned.

Each prison now has the capacity to swab the people in our custody for COVID-19 within the prison. We send the samples to the HSE for testing. As a result, we can identify people in our custody carrying the Covid-19 at an early stage. For more detail in relation to our Prison Healthcare System click here.

When does quarantining happen?

Yes, we introduced quarantining to protect both staff and people in our custody. When a new person is committed to our custody or where a person is brought out of the prison and returned there, such as for Court appearances and hospital appointments where they would have been exposed to the risk of infection. We introduced quarantining to protect our staff and the people in our care this practice will end when the public health advice confirms that it is safe to do so.

Quarantine for Committal

When a person is committed to prison they must stay in quarantine (Separate from the rest of the people within prison) for 14 days. This is to protect your family member, other people in custody and staff. They will be visited daily by a member of our healthcare team to assess for any symptoms of Covid-19.

If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 in prison, they will have the opportunity to get tested. They can have phone calls but we cannot allow visitors during this time. People in custody can continue to get letters and personnel effects from home. They will be given time to exercise in the yard while in quarantine, meals will be delivered to their cell and all medications (if required) will be provided by the Healthcare staff. When the 14 days of quarantine are completed and your relative/ friend has been symptom free they will be placed back into the general population of the prison.

What happens when quarantining a committal is over?

When a person in our custody is returned from an escort to a court appearance in a court house, or from a medical appointment, they may undergo a quarantine process similar to that for a new committal if there Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is breeched in some way during their escort.

Are people in our custody isolating?

Yes, if the person within prison develops any symptoms of Covid-19 they will be placed in isolation and tested for the infection. This is to prevent the spread of infection. The health care team will check the person daily for symptoms of infection. Depending on the results, they may be released back into the general population when they are symptom free.

Mental Health in Prison

1. **Psychiatry Service**

We continue to provide vital mental health services to people in our custody, who can seek access to these services through contact with a nurse and/or the prison doctor. Where necessary, a person in custody can be referred to the Psychiatry Team for assessment, and treatment where warranted.

2. **Psychology Service**

The Psychology Services continues to provide a basic service to people in our custody and they can be accessed to discuss feelings of anxiousness, loneliness or despair. The psychology service can talk them through anxiety episodes and help them if they are feeling depressed. For more information visit our Psychology Service webpage here.

3. **Chaplaincy**

Chaplains continue to work in all 12 prisons. They provide pastoral care and support to people in custody in a variety of ways. The Chaplains provide this support all faiths and none. The people in our custody appreciate having a Chaplain to talk to and to help them cope with their time in custody. This support is especially important if the person in custody is coping with a bereavement of a loved one.

Families who have a relative/friend in prison also value the contact they have with Chaplains. Chaplaincy have adapted in a number of different ways as a result of COVID-19. Also, Chaplaincy are available to people in custody in certain circumstances (those who are isolated and quarantined) through 'Tele Chaplaincy' where an individual in custody can contact a Chaplain by telephone. Sometimes it is required to put a person within the prison into isolation as a public health measure. This may occur if they develop symptoms or if they are in contact with someone who has symptoms. This can affect their mental health. For more information visit the Chaplaincy Service webpage here

What other services are available to people in custody?

1. Resettlement Service

The Resettlement Service is provided in Irish Prisons by an organisation called IASIO. See www.iasio.ie for more information. Your family member can contact IASIO if they need help or advice about welfare or employment.

IASIO can help those completing application forms about housing or apply for a medical card if they are serving a sentence. IASIO provides a Personal Release Pack to people in custody working with their service before they leave prison. This pack shows what steps to take to complete their applications for Housing and Welfare and they should follow this advice. If your loved one is in quarantine or cocooning, they can use the new special phone service, without leaving their cell, to contact IASIO service.

2. Integrated Sentence Managers (ISMs)

The Integrated Sentence Manager Coordinators (ISMs) are people who will assist the person in our custody on how prisons operate and what is available to them. Each prison has an assigned Integrated Sentence Management (ISM) known as the 'ISM Coordinator' in the prison.

If your relative/friend is serving a sentence longer than one year, the ISM Coordinator is available to them to:

- Help make a plan for their time in custody.
- Connect them with services such as healthcare including addiction services, education, work and training, employment supports, the psychology service, and the chaplaincy service.
- Help your relative/friend prepare a plan for release, including connecting them with the resettlement service (to help them apply for housing, welfare supports and a medical card if required).

If your relative/friend has, any questions about their sentence management they can ask their Class Officer to arrange for them to see the ISM Coordinator.

Is healthcare accommodated when a person in custody is granted Temporary Release?

If a person in custody has an under-lying health condition, it is important that they contact the prison healthcare team before being released. All those who are eligible and wish to apply for a medical card before they are released should contact their ISM so that an emergency medical card, valid for 6 months, will be provided before the person leaves custody. This will facilitate access to community GP and pharmacy services.

What about community Healthcare services? Does this help the people in our custody?

In the community, consultations with GPs are now being done over the phone or by video calls. Where appropriate and all attendance at GP surgeries, where necessary are by appointment only. Patients should contact their pharmacy to order prescribed medication before going to the pharmacy. For those prescribed Opiate Substitution Treatment (OST) (like. methadone), there have been changes to clinic access with increased use of phone/video consultations. In addition, more take-outs are being provided and there is less supervised administration.

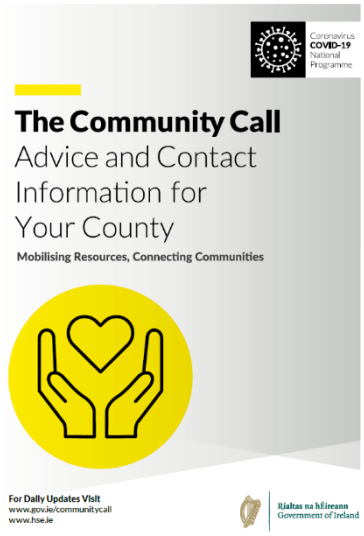
Merchant's Quay Ireland (MQI)

Since 2007 MQI's prison-based addiction counselling teams have provided support to people with substance use issues within the prison system. This service offers counselling, group work and advice with a focus on harm reduction and developing care plans for post-release. Their teams work closely with other disciplines, with the clients' consent, to provide a comprehensive set of interventions. Many people can use their time in custody to identify the underlying issues relating to their offending behaviour and we believe that with appropriate intervention, time can be spent addressing their issues and planning a more positive future for themselves, their family and community.

Counsellors can be accessed directly in each prison or through any Irish Prison Service Healthcare team member. Another part of the service that may be of interest to families is our family support. If families need support around addiction, they can contact our family support service. Our Riverbank Centre family support group is available to people who are worried about the alcohol or drug use of a loved one or family members. They provide advice and support to families and are always open to new members. We encourage people to use the Family Support Network.

Their website, **FSN.IE** has a list of family support meetings in all areas of the country. They can be contacted by email at info@fsn.ie or at the central office in Dublin at 01 8980148.

Further information and helpful services



We are in this together.
As part of the government response to the COVID-19 crisis, your local authority (council) has established a COVID-19 Community Call Forum. Your local forum works with State agencies and community and voluntary groups to provide supports or services to any vulnerable person who needs them. Click here for more information
There are dedicated contact details for each county on the Community Call webpage. Click here

Citizens Information Service

The Citizens Information Service can help you with any query about public services such as housing, education, welfare, medical supports and employment advice. Citizen's information have specific information for families of prisoners. More information available here

Citizens Information also provide information on prisoner's rights. More information here.

During the Covid-19 restrictions, the eight Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service are working together to deliver a single, national call back service. Click “Request a Call Back” on the yellow banner on the top of their page or click here.

Citizens Information provides comprehensive information on public services and on the entitlements of citizens in Ireland.

The Irish Penal Reform Trust

The Irish Penal Reform Trust is a non-governmental organisation that campaigns for the rights of prisoners. It does not provide a service but on its website you can find a range of helpful publications and information for prisoners and their families. It also has contact details of organisations that provide advice and assistance to prisoners, former prisoners and their friends and families. Click here for more information

Care After Prison

Care after prison is a charity organisation which provides support for offenders, their families and victims of crime. They also work closely with families and loved ones of people under sentence and awaiting sentencing.

St Nicholas Trust

St Nicholas Trust is a Cork-based organisation that offers help and support to anybody affected by imprisonment – in particular the families of prisoners.

Bedford Row Family Project

Bedford Row Family Project in Limerick supports family members affected by the imprisonment of one or more of their family. It works for the re-integration of ex-prisoners into their families, their communities, and society in general.

Finding professional help

The Family doctor (GP) can be a great resource for families. If you do not have a GP, you can find a list under 'General Practitioners' in the Golden Pages. A GP can give you information about the supports available in your area.

Emergency Department:

You should contact the nearest general hospital if you believe your loved ones is in immediate danger. You can also contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112.

HSE Mental Health Services

If you or your loved one is involved with a mental health team, you can contact them directly. If not, you will need a referral letter from your GP to access this service.
National and Local Resources and Contact Details
If you or someone you know needs help, the HSE www.yourmentalhealth.ie webpage is a great place to start. This website is the hub for everything mental health -lists supports, services, events and training across the Ireland.

Samaritans

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts. Contact their free helpline: 116 123 or click www.samaritans.ie for more details.

Pieta House

Pieta House provides a free, therapeutic counselling service to people who are experiencing thoughts of suicide and those who engage in self-harm and are bereaved by suicide. Contact 1800 247 247, TEXT HELP to 51444 or click here for more details

Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS)

This is the State's money advice service, guiding people through dealing with problem debt for more than 25 years. Although MABS cannot meet face-to-face right now, money advisers are available by phone, email and live chat.
Contact MABS for free, confidential and independent advice at 0761 072000, request a call back by clicking here, or click here for more details.

Tusla Child and Family Support Agency

Tusla Child and Family Support Agency offers a comprehensive programme of early intervention and family support services. Click here for more details.

Society of St Vincent de Paul

This organisation offers direct, personal assistance that is non-judgemental and based on the need of the individual or family. Contact 01 8848200 or click here for more details.

Women's Aid

Women Aid are committed to combatting domestic violence against women and children. Contact 1800 341 900 or click on Women Aid for more details.

Useful healthcare links

www2.hse.ie/coronavirus - for information on Coronavirus
www.drugs.ie – for Harm Reduction Advice and Coronavirus
www.gov.ie – general information on Coronavirus and national roadmap for recovery
www.medicalcard.ie – for all queries about Medical Cards