



FAMILY INFORMATION BOOKLET



**Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann**
Irish Prison Service

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Introduction

As Director General of the Irish Prison Service (IPS) I thought it would be useful to inform you about recent and future changes made in relation to day-to-day activities in our prisons and the impact they have and will have on friends or relatives of yours in our care. As you know, all 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 or 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. So far we have managed to keep the virus away from all those in custody.

Like other public service providers, IPS has to make very difficult decisions about lifting the restrictions and returning to the 'new normal'. Similar to other residential care facilities, prisons are highly vulnerable to spread 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 to visits by friends, relatives and service providers.

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.

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 few months.

I know that some of our decisions have had a significant impact on the families of those in our care, but 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 due to Covid-19 and have been replaced by video calls. Video phones have been installed in all prisons for this purpose and are now operational. While our video phones help to keep relatives/friends in contact, the number of visits that can take place daily is lower than would normally happen with physical visits to prisons.

As a result, we have had to change the process for arranging a video call and unfortunately to reduce the number of calls 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, instead the prisoner may identify a visitor and prison staff will make the necessary arrangements. These are: the visitor will be notified by email of the date and time of the video call and how to access the call on the day. The “How To” guides below will help you through this process. Please remember that these video calls end automatically after 15 minutes.



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

1. Video call: 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 or friend.

How to make 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 or friend by video call (video and audio) similar to FaceTime, Skype or Zoom. At first, there were some technical difficulties, but now it is working well. That said, like any video calling software, the quality of the call depends on having good broadband speed, Wi-Fi signal and a compatible smart phone, tablet 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, for example yourself, other family or friends. Perhaps discuss this with the person in custody over a phone call before the video call.



Make sure you have good broadband speed,, Wi-Fi connection or mobile data coverage.

Make sure your phone, tablet or computer 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 English, Arabic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Vietnamese.

Having trouble with your device, please call our Helpdesk

If you are having difficulties connecting to a video call, please contact our helpdesk on [057 863 4867](tel:0578634867). It is open from 9.30am to 12.30pm and then again in the afternoon from 2pm to 4.30pm.

Step 2: Be prepared on the day of the call

Decide beforehand if you want to give everyone a chance to talk for a number of minutes or to have an open conversation. Having an open conversation may result in one family member taking up most of the time, which limits the chance for others to chat.

Decide where you are going to make the call from and be aware of background sounds, for example. 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. However, sometimes it can be hard for your relative/friend to talk easily on a video call in the beginning, so chatting about a new painting or a pet can help.

If you want to have a conversation about a particular topic with the person however, consider a neutral background such as a blank wall before starting the 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. For example, if your call is at 4pm, then you can only join the call at 4pm. Remember to log in 5-10 minutes beforehand so that you don’t waste call time!

Step 3: Talking with your relative or friend

It may be hard for your friend/relative to talk using this new technology. To make it easier for the person in custody to have a chat try using the following suggestions:

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

These should help 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 a video call 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 for children to demonstrate activities or tasks, which could not be performed in a visiting area.

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, for example new pets, home renovations, etc.
- Reduces the stress of worrying about family entering the prison.

Please remember:



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



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

Section 2 Physical Visits

We fully appreciate how important contact with family and friends are to people in our custody and we are committed to the return of physical visits as soon as it is considered safe to do so. With that in mind, IPS has outlined plans for a phased return of physical visits to prisons starting on Monday, 20 July 2020.

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 start again 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 transmission rate in the community at the time.

Please note, ensure you arrive on time to the prison for your visit, failure to do so will result in your visit being cancelled and you will have to reschedule for another date.

Summary of Phases

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

- Physical visits will start again on Monday, 20 July 2020.
- People in custody are currently entitled to one video call per week
- From 20 July 2020 people in custody will also be entitled to receive **one 15-minute physical visit per fortnight**
- On any week people in custody may opt for a physical visit, s/he will not have access to a video call.
- Physical visits during this phase will be **limited to one adult** person (over 18 years of age).
- In order to prevent the potential spread of infection all visits will be behind clear screens and visitors will be required to wear a face mask at all times.
- No physical contact between prisoners and family members will be permitted.

Phase 2 – Monday, 17 August 2020

- People in custody will be entitled to receive **one 15-minute physical visit per fortnight per fortnight.**
- On any week people in custody may opt for a physical visit, he/she will not have access to a video call.
- Physical visits during this phase will be limited to **one adult** visitor who may be accompanied by **one person under 18 years of age.**
- In order to prevent the potential spread of infection all visits will be behind clear screens and Adults will be required to wear a face masks at all times. **Children between the ages of 10 to 18** must also wear a face mask at all time. **Children below 10 years of age** are not required to wear a face mask but may do so if they wish to. We would encourage all visitors to prison to wear a face mask to help protect your loved ones and also help prevent an further spread of infection in the community.
- No physical contact between prisoners and family members will be permitted.

We will continue to offer virtual visits to all prisoners on weeks where prisoners are not availing of physical visits. Furthermore, people in custody will not be permitted to avail of a virtual visit on the same week as they receive a physical visit. Accordingly, the following visiting options may be utilised by prisoners:

- 2 physical and 2 virtual visits per month
- 3 virtual and 1 physical per month

- 4 virtual visits per month.

The operation and frequency of visits will be kept under review guided both by public health advice and our desire to support as much contact as possible between people in custody and their relatives and friends. 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 face mask in the visiting room. All visitors will be provided with a new face covering 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 clear screens and visitors will be required to wear a face masks at all times.
- No physical contact between you and the person in custody will be permitted. 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.



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 may be there also with their sniffer or drug dogs. The Irish Prison Service has enhanced the fight against drug-trafficking by the introduction of airport-style swabbing for drug residues. Drug-swabbing machines will be present and all visitors will be tested before they may enter the visiting room.

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



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

Overdose Warning

Drug 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, for you and for 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](tel:1800855717) 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 with our security staff, where possible leave the following items outside the prison:

- Jewellery,
- Belts,
- Watches,
- Other possessions that 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 answer a number of health related questions to identify potential risk factors for Covid-19 infection. The questions asked may change from time to time.
- Please answer the questions honestly. We will check your temperature using a thermal scanner. If you answer yes to certain questions, or if your temperature is 38 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. This is done with the best interest of people in our care and staff in mind.

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 legislation. We collect answers to our questionnaire in a discreet way and in an area that will allow for privacy. We will not keep a record of your screening answers or your temperature check once the screening is completed. However, staff performing the screening may be interviewed as part of a contact tracing activity and may share information about you that they recall as required under public health requirements. 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 be delays accessing the prison and the visiting room. Please expect them. 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 cash or postal orders 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 being phasing out. Visitors will no longer be allowed to bring cash into prisons for lodging into prisoners' accounts nor will cash be available for people in custody to give 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 An Post BillPay Card. Your relative/friend in prison must fill in a form nominating someone to whom the BillPay card can be sent and authorising the Irish Prison Service to send that person the card. Once the nominated person receives the BillPay Card he or she can call in to any post office in the State, hand the BillPay Card in at the counter and lodge funds in cash or by debit card.

You will be given a receipt, which you should keep as proof of payment. The maximum transaction is €200. The card may be shared by family members to send funds to the person in custody.

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 usually be in the person in custody's account the next day. The maximum transaction is €200. You will receive a receipt by email, 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, tablet, 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 this amount 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?

For general queries please look up Lodging Money to Prisoner Account on the Irish Prison Service Website – www.irishprisons.ie or for individual queries, please email PAMSCash@irishprisons.ie

Disclaimer:

Irish Prison Service bears no responsibility for errors made in the completion of bank transfers – if incorrect details are entered on a bank transfer it 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 bank/An Post electronic funds transfer system rules 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:

- The gratuity they receive;
- The quality of accommodation;
- Their facilities;
- The level of 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?



Our staff take their responsibility to share Covid-19 information with the people in our custody extremely seriously. They do this work by:

- 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.

In order to share the latest information about Covid-19 and changes in prisons we have meetings with prisoner focus groups. We also send around a 'Covid-19 Prisoner Information Newsletter' fortnightly to everybody in custody direct to their cell, delivered by Red Cross volunteers (who are persons in custody themselves).

As in the community outside of prison, and for their own safety, some people in custody are cocooning, in isolation or in quarantine. For these people who are alone in their cells, we publish a fortnightly newsletter called 'Living in Cell Newsletter' and are also delivered to the relevant cells by the Red Cross volunteers.

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

Each of the newsletters is four pages long. We aim to make them both useful and entertaining by including fun information, pieces with educational value, crosswords, puzzles and sometimes a joke or two.

We try to take into account that some people have difficulties with reading, may have poor eyesight or whose mother tongue is not English, so we use clear language and images to get our messages across in all notices and newsletters. We have the newsletters translated into various languages, and they are given out to different nationalities we have in our custody. We will continue to publish both newsletters during the summer to keep people in custody up-to-date on the latest information relating to Covid-19. A lot of effort goes into writing these newsletters and we hope that the content strikes the right note. We would like to thank our Red Cross volunteers in particular for continuing to deliver the newsletters to cells during this time.

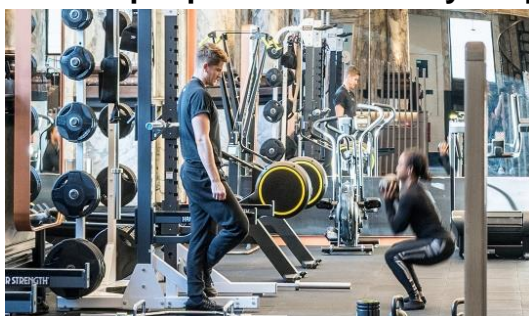
Do people in custody still take part in work & training?



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 has 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?

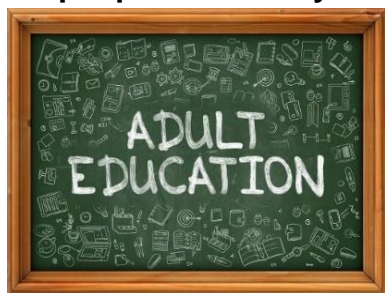


All people in custody have access to gyms, which they may use or they may exercise in their cell.

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?



As in the whole country, formal education services in prisons have been closed from 13 March 2020. However, teachers have continued to provide educational services to students in custody so that both accredited and non-accredited learning has not been interrupted during the pandemic. Their work includes supplying educational resources such as books, art supplies and printouts, which were delivered by Red Cross volunteers to students in their cells.

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

We made every effort to help students complete their OU courses by June 2020. In cases where only one OU assignment was incomplete due to Covid-19, a Special Circumstances Form was completed so those students can progress to the next part of their course. Where more than one assignment was outstanding, they were deferred and students may complete the remaining assignments from September, the completed assignments are “banked”.

Students completing Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) courses have been completing their assignments in-cell, with the support of their teachers.

As in the community, Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate State exams may be completed by students in prison schools. Teachers in prisons completed the calculated grades process 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.



As in the general population, it is intended that adult learners will be given the opportunity to take their final Junior Certificate examinations in autumn 2020. The exam dates will be notified by the Department of Education in due course.

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 writing pads and pens were provided for students to continue with creative writing and to use these resources to write to loved ones during this time. These were purchased by education staff and were handed out to people in their cells by the Red Cross volunteers. People sharing cells are asked not to share educational materials or resources such as pens, pencils or books at this time.

Every household in the country received two free-post Postcards. Education staff contacted An Post and they were delighted to provide us with two freepost An Post postcards for

everyone in custody. The postcards were then dropped by Red Cross volunteers to every cell. Many people in custody wrote them to loved ones or received them from loved ones outside prison. All postcard collections and distributions were done by Red Cross volunteers and sent out in the post in the usual way, through the Censor's Office in the prison. We are grateful to the Red Cross volunteers for this and for all their work.

Also similar to what has happened in the community, stress balls were given to people in custody who are cocooning. People over 70 years of age in the community and people cocooning in prisons 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 received them in their cells during Covid19.

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 they do, and we have provided an extra TV channel to show Netflix series on a scheduled basis. The Irish Prison Service is also planning to extend a pilot TV service that broadcasts information, education and support services that are of interest to people in custody, like that already in place in Mountjoy, Midlands and Limerick Prisons. This channel will also include health information during the Covid-19 period.

Section 4: Healthcare in prisons



Our healthcare team have been extremely busy over the last few months helping to keep coronavirus away from our prisoner population. 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 will

be in a position to identify any 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?

IPS has introduced quarantining to protect both staff and people in our prisons. This happens when a new person is committed to our custody or returns to prison after a court appearance or hospital appointment where they might have been exposed to the risk of infection. Quarantining is to protect our staff and the people in our care, and this practice will only end when the public health advice confirms that it is safe to do so.

Quarantine on committal.

When a person is committed to prison he/she is placed in quarantine (separate from other people within prison) for 14 days. This is to protect your family member/friend, other people in custody and staff from the possible spread of Covid-19. They will be visited daily by a member of our healthcare team and checked for symptoms of the virus.

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 them visitors during this time. People in custody will continue to get any letters and personal effects from home. They will also get 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.

What happens when quarantining on committal is over?

When the 14 days of quarantine are completed and your relative/friend has been symptom free, they will join the general population of the prison.

What happens if a person in custody has to attend court or hospital?

When a person in our custody returns from an escorted appearance in a court house or a medical appointment, they may undergo a quarantine process similar to that for a new committal if their personal protective equipment is breeched in some way during the escort.

Are people in our custody isolating?

Yes, if a person in custody 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 healthcare 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

Sometimes it is necessary 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.

1. Psychiatry Service

We continue to provide vital mental health services to people in our custody, who may 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 necessary.

2. Psychology Service

The Psychology Service continues to provide a service to people in our custody and they may 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 Service

Chaplains continue to work in all prisons. They provide pastoral care and support to people in custody in a variety of ways. The chaplains provide this support to people of all faiths and none. The people in our custody often 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 is coping with a bereavement of a loved one.

We know families who have a relative/friend in prison also value the contact they have with chaplains. The Chaplaincy Service has adapted in a number of ways during Covid-19, such as being available to people in isolation or quarantined through 'Tele Chaplaincy', where an individual in custody can contact a chaplain by telephone. For more information visit the Chaplaincy Service webpage [here](#)

What other services are available to people in custody?

1. Resettlement Service for prisoners nearing release.

The Resettlement Service is provided in Irish prisons by an organisation called Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities or 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 Management Coordinators (ISMs)

The Integrated Sentence Management Coordinators (ISMs) are prison staff who help the person in our custody to understand how prisons operate and what is available to them. Each prison has an assigned ISM Coordinator.

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 and Chaplaincy Services;
- 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 Coordinator so that an emergency medical card, valid for 6 months, can be provided before the person leaves custody. This will facilitate access to a community doctor (general practitioner, 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. All visits to GP surgeries, where necessary, are by appointment only.

Patients should contact their pharmacy to order prescribed medication before going to the pharmacy.

There have been changes to clinic access for those prescribed Opiate Substitution Treatment (OST), like methadone, with increased use of phone or 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 abuse issues within the prison system. This service offers counselling, group work and advice with a focus on harm reduction and developing care plans for when they leave prison. Their teams work closely with other services, 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.

Family Support

Another part of the service that may be of interest to families is family support. If families need support around addiction, they can contact the family support service. Their Riverbank Centre family support group is available to people who are worried about the alcohol or drug use of a loved one or family member. 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](tel:018980148).

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

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

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](#).

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.

<http://careafterprison.ie/>

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.

<https://www.stnicholastrust.ie/>

Bedford Row Family Project



BEDFORD ROW FAMILY PROJECT
TIONSADAL TEAGHLACH RAE BEDFORD

Bedford Row Family Project in Limerick supports family members affected by the imprisonment of a family member. It works for the re-integration of ex-prisoners into their families, their communities, and society in general. <https://www.bedfordrow.ie/>

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 relating to mental health: it lists supports, services, events and training across Ireland.

Samaritans



Samaritans provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 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 or have been bereaved by suicide. Contact [1800 247 247](tel:1800247247), Text [HELP](tel:51444) to [51444](tel:51444) or click [here](http://www.pieta.ie) 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 [076 1072000](tel:0761072000), request a call back by clicking [here](#), or click [here](#) for more details.

Tusla Child and Family Support Agency



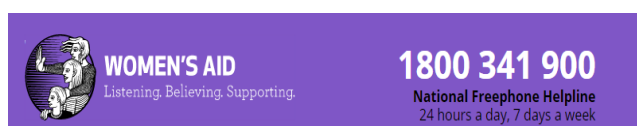
Tusla Child and Family Support Agency offers a comprehensive programme of early intervention and family support services. Click [here](#) for more details.

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](tel:018848200) 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](tel:1800341900) or click on [Women Aid](#) for more details.

Useful healthcare links

www2.hse.ie/coronavirus - for information on Coronavirus/Covid-19.

www.drugs.ie – for Harm Reduction Advice and Coronavirus/Covid-19.

www.gov.ie – general information on Coronavirus and national roadmap for recovery.

www.medicalcard.ie – for all queries about medical cards.