

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Family linking

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1 Why link family members and friends?

Being in prison can have a devastating impact not only upon those detained, but also on their families and friends.

- Initially you can feel shock and distress at the separation and your changed circumstances.
- Longer term you may experience a strong sense of loss, anger, guilt and grief.
- It is often difficult to talk to those around you about having a relative or friend in prison, and to feel that you are having to live through the experience alone.
- Prisoners Abroad is hoping that by putting people in contact with others who also have family members in prison abroad, this sense of distress and isolation can be minimised.

There may well be several reasons that mean you might like to contact other family members who are going through a similar experience. It may be:

- to talk to someone who knows what it is like at first hand to have a family member or friend in prison abroad.
- to talk about the conditions in the prison where your relative is being held, with someone who has a family member detained in the same prison.
- for practical reasons, such as finding out about travel arrangements, or what the procedure is when you enter the prison for a visit.
- Prisoners Abroad hopes to be able to link you with someone who is most suited to the type of support you are looking for.

2 Ways of contacting another family member or friend

You may find that speaking over the phone is the best way to establish a link. Alternatively you may feel more comfortable making contact by e-mail or letter. These may prove to be cheaper options for family members living abroad, as well as more feasible due to differences in time zones.

You may feel that you are not in need of a link yourself but would be happy to receive calls from other family members and offer them some support. Offering this kind of support could prove invaluable to other families or friends of prisoners.

3 Steps to family linking

If you are interested in linking up with another family member or friend, please contact us to ask for the questionnaire to fill in. We will then send you a letter along with details of people who fit the criteria you have specified – this can take time if there is nobody on the scheme to link you with yet. We will also enclose a list of guidelines to keep in mind if and when contacting your “link” by phone, so that both participants feel comfortable during the call.

We hope that this family linking scheme will develop and prove to be useful and supportive to relatives and friends of British prisoners abroad.

If you are interested in receiving a family linking form, or would like to discuss the scheme further, please contact the casework team at Prisoners Abroad on our Family Freephone number 0808 172 0098.

If you require this leaflet in a large print format, please contact us. Our details are below.

Tel: 0808 172 0098 (free from within the UK)
+44 20 7561 6820 from outside the UK

Email: info@PrisonersAbroad.org.uk

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