

FACTSHEET

Guidance for Immigration and Parole Officers

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Prisoners Abroad occasionally receive referrals directly from Immigration and Parole Officers, or Officers will give details of Prisoners Abroad to detainees awaiting deportation. Because of this we felt it would be useful to provide some basic bullet points about working together and how Prisoners Abroad works with its clients. In addition to this factsheet a Resettlement Handbook is also available to prisoners or anyone helping a prisoner prepare for release. If you have not seen this booklet and would like to obtain a copy please contact Prisoners Abroad at info@Prisonersabroad.org.uk or your local British Consul, to request one.

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1 About Prisoners Abroad

Prisoners Abroad is a non-governmental organisation that works closely with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). We:

- Can only work with British Citizens imprisoned overseas (and their families and dependants)
- Make no moral judgement about the people with whom we work –convicted and unconvicted, guilty or innocent
- Provide free and confidential services on the basis of need

Prisoners Abroad can be contacted in any of the ways given below.

By phone: +44 20 75 61 68 20
By fax: +44 20 75 61 68 21
By email: info@prisonersabroad.org.uk
By mail: Prisoners Abroad
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2 Resettlement in the UK

Many of those facing deportation have not lived in the UK for many years and coming back often means leaving their family and a familiar way of life. They are likely to need some practical guidance and advice in the initial stages of resettlement. Because of this Prisoners Abroad has a Resettlement Service which helps by providing returning prisoners with:

- Advice and assistance with finding emergency accommodation
- Emergency grants (dependent on individual circumstances)
- Advice on welfare benefits
- Referrals to appropriate agencies offering specialist help e.g. With medical or drug problems
- The opportunity to talk through experiences, concerns or worries with a keyworker

3 Realities of resettlement and realistic expectations

Because prisoners can be very distressed by the thought of deportation and arriving in a country they know nothing about, they are often reluctant to prepare for release. We also find they can have very unrealistic expectations of what things will be like in the UK. They believe the fact that they have been deported and have no-one in the UK to help them will automatically mean the government will provide things like housing and money. The realities are:

- The government will not automatically provide housing for deported ex-prisoners. In fact those who have served a sentence can find themselves turned down for housing because they have been in prison, the government's argument being that they would have had a place to live if they had not gone to prison and therefore by their own actions they have made themselves homeless.
- Prisoners Abroad will not be able to guarantee housing. If a person has no funds we can pay for a cheap backpackers' hostel, but this is for a limited period of time (usually the first 2 weeks). It will be shared, dormitory accommodation.
- The only accommodation available may be a privately-rented studio apartment or room in a shared house.
- Welfare benefit payments are inadequate. People will have to budget on a very small amount of money, in a very expensive city.
- It usually takes 4-6 weeks to receive a first benefit payment, but can take longer.
- It can take some time to find work. Basic things need to be in place before a person can take up a job offer, such as an address, sufficient ID, and a bank account.

As you might imagine it is vital that deportees try to prepare for their release.

4 What can I do to help?

One of the main points to remember is a British Citizen must register with Prisoners Abroad prior to leaving the country. **We do not offer a service to those who are not registered clients before their deportation.**

To register, a prisoner must sign our Authorisation Form, available from our website (www.prisonersabroad.org.uk/forms.html), or from the British Consul. You can also contact caseworkers directly to obtain a form. You can do this by emailing info@prisonersabroad.org.uk. A signed authorisation form allows us to legally hold information under the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and also enables us to share information with the FCO.

We are aware that privacy laws are very strict in some countries, so please encourage those likely to be deported to make contact themselves with the British Consulate. On receipt of an authorisation form Prisoners Abroad will check with the Consulate and the FCO if the person is known to them as a British Citizen. It is also important that a person comes back with full ID (a full British Passport is vital) and so they will need to arrange this via the Consul.

Safety of our staff and protection of the public is a primary concern for Prisoners Abroad; we will always seek information about a person's conviction. This is another reason why it is important for people to be encouraged to register with us. We can provide any further information on confidentiality and disclosure issues as needed. Please contact us if you would like further information or if you have any questions.

5 Release and Resettlement Checklist for Prisoners

Please encourage anyone you are working with to look at the following checklist and try to achieve some of the things on the list.

Have you:

- Registered with Prisoners Abroad by signing and sending back the Authorisation Form to the Prisoners Abroad Office?
- Contacted your Caseworker at Prisoners Abroad to inform them of your likely release date?
- Completed and sent back a Prisoners Abroad Resettlement Needs Assessment Form?
- Contacted your local British Consul to talk over the release process?
- If relevant, have you organised for the cost of your flight to be paid for?
- Organised your onward journey in the UK (e.g. will you have money to pay for a train/coach? Do you know how to contact Travelcare at the airport, (who can help with your onward journey?)
- Talked to the prison authorities and the Consulate about obtaining a full passport for travel and identification purposes?
- Got together any other forms of ID (especially if it includes a photograph) e.g. Driving Licence or Birth Certificate?
- Obtained copies of your medical records or any other official documentation that may be available concerning health problems, drug or alcohol programmes or treatment programmes you may have undertaken?

- Put together what money you can bring with you (in cash or traveller's cheques; cheques in a foreign currency are nearly impossible to cash in the UK without a Bank Account)?
- Asked any friends or relatives in the UK if they can offer you any temporary help e.g. place to sleep for a few days?
- Made a note to hold on to any deportation/expulsion papers you are given by the officials of the country you are leaving?

Doing all of this may not be possible for some people, but preparing can help a little to ease the very difficult readjustment they face returning to this country. Please encourage them to do whatever they can.

If you or the prisoner you are working with has any questions about the issues raised on this factsheet please do not hesitate to contact us.

The information provided in this factsheet is intended for information purposes only. It is not intended to constitute, nor does it constitute legal advice. Prisoners Abroad recommend that professional legal advice should always be sought. The information contained in this factsheet is subject to change and may not be up-to-date or accurate. Prisoners Abroad gives no warranty and makes no representation regarding the accuracy or completeness of the information provided. Prisoners Abroad will not be held responsible for any loss or damage arising from the use of the information provided.

If you spot any errors or inaccuracies in this factsheet please let us by emailing info@prisonersabroad.org.uk. Thank you.

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

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