Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

RESETTLEMENT Handbook

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Introduction

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) was set up in 1985 by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference to give information and support to Irish people in prison overseas and to their families. There are an estimated eleven hundred Irish people in prison in more than thirty countries around the world, the majority in England and Wales.

We also provide information, support, advocacy and referral services to Irish people who have returned home after being imprisoned overseas. The needs of former prisoners as they resettle in Ireland after release from prison and continue their lives here can be many and varied. The ICPO put together this booklet to provide practical information to help you when you return to Ireland.

You may notice many changes when you arrive back in Ireland and some things may not be as you expected. You may have to get used to new technology and new ways of getting information and of accessing services. This booklet, which is also available on the ICPO website, provides you with information on life in Ireland and the services and information you may need as you move on with your life. It also provides some tips and advice about how you can prepare for your return.

It is very important to prepare early for returning home and your ICPO caseworker will be in contact with you in plenty of time to assess your needs and send you information about returning to Ireland. There are some types of accommodation and support that can be accessed only from prison because they require a referral from your social worker, offender manager or other relevant prison staff. If you have questions that are not answered in this booklet or are specific to your own situation, do not hesitate to get in contact with your ICPO caseworker.

Returning to Ireland having completed your sentence is an exciting yet challenging time. It is a new start and an opportunity to rebuild your life.

We hope you find this booklet useful and wish you every success in the future.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this booklet is constantly changing and subject to variation. While every effort has been made to ensure that the content is accurate and up to date, the ICPO accepts no responsibility or liability for any harm, loss or damage arising as a consequence of its use.

Preparing for Release

Preparing for release can be a challenging time for people in prison. While you will be looking forward to being released, you may have concerns about returning to Ireland, resuming family life and your resettlement, especially if you have been in prison for a long time. Feelings of insecurity and anxiety during this time are sometimes known as 'gate fever'. It is natural to feel apprehensive and you are not alone in feeling this way. There is support and help available when you return to Ireland.

There are many things you can do while still in prison to prepare for your release and these are detailed below. The more preparation you can do while still in prison, the easier it will be when you are released.

Preparation for release will depend on many factors, including the country where you are imprisoned, the conditions of your release (if any) and, in some circumstances, the offence you were convicted of. If you are being deported, you may be detained in an immigration detention centre for a period of time before you are deported. If you are not liable for deportation, you may be required to live in an approved hostel or half-way house after release.

Deportation and Expulsion

Foreign prisoners in some countries will be deported after serving their sentence. If you are being deported, instead of being released when your sentence is complete or after you have been paroled, you will be transferred to the immigration authorities in the country from which you are being deported. In some countries, such as the United States and Australia, you may be detained for up to several months by the immigration authorities before your deportation.

In general, if you are deported, the country that is deporting you will cover the cost of your flight home but if you try to return to that country at a later date you may be expected to pay back the cost of your deportation. Some countries expect the person being deported to pay for the cost of deportation and, in these cases, you may have to remain in an immigration centre until you have sufficient funds to cover the cost.

In the case of expulsion, people being expelled are expected to leave the country where they served their sentence of their own accord, usually within a specified period of time. If you are expelled, you must make your own travel arrangements back to Ireland.

If you are in prison in a country other than the UK, it is worth contacting the Irish embassy or consulate in plenty of time for advice regarding your deportation/expulsion.

Irish people in prison in the UK are generally not deported (For further information see ICPO factsheet 'Deportation – Irish Prisoners in the UK', which is available on the ICPO website or from your ICPO caseworker). However, Irish prisoners in EU countries can also be deported or expelled in certain circumstances. Irish prisoners in non-EU countries including the US and Australia will generally be deported unless they are also citizens of those countries. You may be deported even if you have lived in that country for some time as a permanent resident but have not become a citizen. In some cases you may also be deported even if you have family members in the country where you served your sentence.

While many people look forward to returning home to Ireland, others find deportation difficult, especially if they have lived in the country where they were imprisoned for many years and have friends and even some family there. You may experience a sense of sorrow and loss when you move home.

If you are deported or expelled, you may be banned from returning to that country for a specified time or in some cases permanently. The rules regarding deportation and expulsion vary considerably from country to country so it is very important to get legal advice regarding the conditions attached to your deportation or expulsion. If you return to that country while still prohibited from doing so, this is generally regarded as a criminal offence and you could face arrest.

If you consider that you have a good reason to be permitted to remain in the country where you served your sentence, such as having close family members there, you should get legal advice. If you are deported and have close family in the country of sentence who are not Irish, you may be able to apply for them to join you in Ireland. You should contact an immigration lawyer for further advice.

Arriving Back in Ireland

It is important to let your family know when you expect to arrive back in Ireland so that they can meet you. If you do not have any family or friends to meet you when you arrive, please let the ICPO know and we can arrange for a caseworker to meet you if you return to Dublin Airport. This will provide an opportunity for you to speak with the caseworker about your resettlement and ask any questions you may have. This should be planned well in advance with your ICPO caseworker. If you do not have any place to stay and are returning

on a weekend, we may be able to arrange accommodation for a couple of nights after you return to Ireland.

Returning to Ireland on Licence

In the UK, prisoners serving a determinate or fixed sentence of over twelve months will serve half their sentence in prison and the remaining half in the community on licence. People serving indeterminate sentences (those serving life sentences or sentenced to Imprisonment for Public Protection [IPP]) may also be released on licence. People serving a life sentence will be subject to licence conditions for the rest of their life following release from prison. People serving a sentence of IPP will be subject to licence conditions for at least ten years.

Many Irish people in the UK who are due to be released on licence apply to return to Ireland to resettle while on licence. However, only a small number of Irish people on licence are permitted to return while on licence. For further information on licence, please see our factsheets, which are available on the ICPO website or from your ICPO caseworker. Please also see the UK Ministry of Justice and HMPPS Policy Framework 'Travel and Transfer on Licence and PSS Outside of England and Wales'. This is available at: **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006203/travel-transfer-licence-outside-policy-framework.pdf**.

If your application to return to Ireland to resettle while on licence is approved, it is likely you will have to spend some time on licence in the UK before you can return to Ireland. You should not come to Ireland even for a brief visit during this period without permission. If you do travel without permission, you may have breached the terms of your licence and may be recalled to prison.

If you are permitted to resettle in Ireland on licence, it is important to be aware that the licence remains in force while you are here. If you return to the UK prior to the expiry of the licence, you should contact the relevant probation office within two working days. If you fail to do this, proceedings may be issued for breach of licence, the licence may be revoked and you may be recalled to prison.

There may be some conditions of your licence that will affect your life in Ireland; for example, you may be required to remain away from certain areas. It is important that you understand the terms of your licence before you return home.

The ICPO may be able to offer supports to people returning by way of advice and information, regular telephone contact, signposting to services and making referrals to specific/specialist services.

Preparing for Release – Practical Things You Can Do

- Contact the Irish embassy/consulate, in particular if you are being deported. They can provide you with an emergency travel document for your journey back to Ireland if necessary. You should also get a copy of the emergency travel document as the original will be removed when you arrive at passport control in Ireland.
- Apply for a passport if your Irish passport has expired or if it has been lost or mislaid. This will not always be possible and will not affect your deportation/ return to Ireland.
- Complete and return your ICPO Authorisation Form and Resettlement Form if you have not already done so. This will help us to understand your needs and assist you better when you arrive back home.
- Organise medication and prescriptions. You should get at least a week's supply of your medication to cover you until you can make an appointment with a GP in Ireland.
- Obtain your medical records or any other official documentation that may be available concerning any health problems, drug or alcohol problems or treatment you may have had while in prison.
- Arrange to collect your personal property including any money you may have in your prison account.
- Ensure that you have clothes to wear on release. This is particularly the case if you must wear a prison uniform and are not allowed your own clothes in prison. You may order clothing from the prison catalogue or in some countries there are charities that can provide you with clothing.
- Ensure that you understand the release process in your prison. If you are not sure about this, ask your social worker or other prison staff.
- Bring any documentation you may have in relation to your incarceration and deportation (if relevant) with you.
- If you have completed educational or other courses while in prison, ensure to bring your qualifications or evidence that you have completed the course with you. These may help with finding employment when you return to Ireland.
- If you are not being deported, ensure that you have enough money for your travel home.
- Be prepared in case you are released at the weekend or out of hours.
- Inform your family, friends and support organisations (as relevant) of your release date.
- Ask family and friends if they can accommodate you at least initially when you return to Ireland, as accommodation can be scarce and expensive.
- It is advisable to change some money into euros (or if you are not returning to Ireland, the currency of the country you are returning to), if possible before you leave the country where you served your sentence in case foreign exchange outlets are closed when you arrive.

Adjusting to Release and Returning to Your Family

Many people who are released from prison find the adjustment to life after release difficult at first. While you were in prison, decisions were made for you: when to get up in the morning; when and what to eat; what to do. Now you will have to make decisions about your life. Life in prison does not change much from day to day; however, life on the outside is constantly changing. Things will not be the same as they were before you went to prison. Your neighbourhood or community may have changed, prices will have increased and you may have to get used to new technology.

Your experiences in prison may also have an impact on your ability to adjust to life outside prison. Many people find life in prison traumatic and may develop mental or physical health problems.

It is important to be realistic about coming home. Try not to expect too much from yourself or others. You are making a fresh start. It will take time so you should not expect to have everything organised in the first few weeks. It can take time to resettle in Ireland and it can be challenging. It might be useful to consider what your expectations are and whether they are realistic and how you will cope if things do not go exactly to plan.

- Set small goals
- Be prepared for rejection and disappointment
- Get involved in the community. This can include involvement with sports activities, Church/faith groups or volunteering with a charity and can help you adjust to life after prison and make new friendships
- Ask for help
- Try to stay positive and motivated

Remember you can always call ICPO and talk things through with your caseworker.

Family Life

The lives of your family members have continued while you were in prison. If you have children, they will be older, with different friends, schools and interests. Your partner may have had to take on new responsibilities. If you are returning to live with your parents, this may be the first time you have lived with them as an adult. You may have had a family bereavement during your time in

prison. Both you and your family will need time to adjust to your being home and your role within the family may be different. It is important to stay positive, be flexible and open to change.

While you have had difficult times in prison, it is important to remember that your family or individual members of your family also have had different but nevertheless difficult experiences. These may include:

- Rejection by friends, neighbours or workmates
- Children not coping with your imprisonment or being bullied by schoolmates
- Media attention
- Paying bills and household expenses on one income instead of two
- Costs of prison visits on the family, particularly if they have had to borrow money

Your role within the family may change, at least temporarily, while you get back on your feet. You might be dependent on your family while you find work, which may be a new experience for you. You may return to live with your parents in their home which you have not done since you were a teenager. They may have certain rules that they will expect you to abide by. You may find this difficult and it is important to have honest discussions with your family.

Some relationships do not survive a spouse or partner being in prison. It is not unusual to feel angry or resentful towards your former partner or blame them for not working harder at your relationship while you were in prison; however, while such feelings are normal, they are unhelpful and prevent you from moving on with your life. Counselling, individually or together with your family members, can help you to work through your difficulties.

Some people returning home after serving a sentence, especially a lengthy sentence, may no longer have any family left in Ireland. It can be difficult to cope if family members have passed away while you were in prison. Counselling may help – the **Irish Hospice Foundation** provides support and advice through its Bereavement Support Line. You can contact them at **1800 807 077**.

The ICPO provides support to family members as well as to people in prison overseas. One of the supports we offer is our 'Family Resource', which is a booklet that provides information for family members to help them cope with the practical and emotional impact of imprisonment on the family. If you or your family member would like a copy, please contact the ICPO Maynooth office on **01 505 3156**, email **info@icpo.ie** or write to ICPO, PO Box 13484, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Identification Documents

Identification (ID) is a document that proves who you are. It is very important to have a photo ID in order to apply for various services when you return to Ireland. You should start arranging ID before you leave prison if possible.

You will need it to:

- Open a bank account
- Apply for social welfare
- Get a driving licence
- Access accommodation

Types of ID

Some common forms of ID are:

- Passport
- Driving licence
- Public services card

PPS Number

To get some forms of ID, including a passport, you will need a PPS (Personal Public Service) number. This is a unique identification number for all dealings with the public service, including social welfare, tax, education and health services. You will need a PPS number to access social welfare, apply for a medical card and to register with Revenue when you start work. If you were born in Ireland after 1971 or you started work in Ireland after 1979, you will already have a PPS number. You may also have been issued with a PPS number if you received social welfare payments in Ireland.

A PPS number was previously known as an RSI number and has seven numbers followed by either one or two letters. A PPS number is equivalent to a National Insurance (NI) number in the UK, Social Security number in the US and a TFN in Australia. If you have a PPS or RSI number, you will not have to apply for a new one on your return to Ireland.

Can't Remember Your PPS Number or Do Not Remember if you Had One?

To check if you have a PPS number, you can contact **Client Identity Services** by calling: **0818 927 999** (from Republic of Ireland) or **00353 71 967 2616** (from outside Republic of Ireland). If you have access to email you can contact them at: **cis@welfare.ie**. They will ask you a number of questions to confirm your identity, such as your full name, date of birth, mother's maiden name and your last Irish address. You can also contact the PPS number allocation centre for the county where you are living and they will find the number for you. The contact details of these centres can be found on the **Department of Social Protection (DSP)** website: **https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f3690a-personal-public-service-pps-number-allocation-centres-by-county**.

The ICPO may be able to assist you with this while you are still in prison. We will ask you to sign an authorisation giving us permission to request your PPS number from the DSP.

Applying for a PPS Number when you Return to Ireland

If you have not had a PPS/RSI number previously, you may apply online through **MyWelfare** at: **https://services.mywelfare.ie/en/topics/identity-services/personal-public-service-pps-number/**. You will need to have a basic **MyGovID** account. You can apply for this at: **www.mygovid.ie**. To apply for your PPS number you will need to upload the following documents:

- Your identity document
- Evidence of your address
- Evidence of why you need a PPS number

You can also apply by attending the local PPS number allocation centre (see above section) and completing an application form. You must have evidence of identity and of your address in Ireland.

If you are an Irish citizen born in Ireland, you should provide your birth certificate (long form) and a photographic ID, such as passport or driving licence. If you are an Irish citizen through naturalisation, you should provide your certificate of naturalisation or current passport. If you are an Irish citizen through foreign birth registration, you should provide your foreign birth registration certificate and your Irish/UK driving licence or Irish learner permit.

You can use any of the following documents to prove your address as long as it is not more than three months old.

- A utility bill (for example, an electricity or gas bill)
- An official letter or document
- A financial statement (for example, a bank statement)
- Tenancy agreement
- Confirmation of address by a third party (for example, if you are living in a hostel, a letter from the manager confirming your address would be acceptable. If you are staying with your family or friends, a household bill together with a letter from the bill holder saying that you are living there, will be acceptable as evidence of address)

Birth Certificate

If you do not have a birth certificate or have lost or mislaid it, it is important to get one as you will need this to apply for a passport. You can apply online at: **www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/order/birth-certificate/**. A full birth certificate costs €40. You can also apply to the **General Register's Office** in Roscommon by completing an application form and sending it with the fee to:

General Register Office
Government Offices
Convent Road
Roscommon
F42 VX53

You can find the application form at: **www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/E-mail-Application-Form-in-English.pdf.**

You may also send the application form to your local civil register office. Details are available at: **www2.hse.ie/services/births-deaths-and-marriages/find-a-civil-registration-service/**.

Note: If you require a copy of your birth certificate for social welfare purposes, including to apply for a public services card, this will not cost you anything; however, you will need a letter from the Department of Social Protection.

Passport

It is advisable to apply for a passport while still in prison if you do not have a passport, it has been lost or mislaid or if it has expired. However, it may not be possible to do so for various reasons, including being unable to have passport photographs taken within the prison. If you are being deported, you will not need your passport to return to Ireland. The Irish embassy or consulate will issue you with an emergency travel document to enable you to return to Ireland.

You should ask for a copy of this document as the original will be taken at passport control on arrival in Ireland. The copy will be useful in helping establish your identity.

If you are not being deported, you will require a passport to travel to Ireland. You can apply for a passport through your Irish embassy or consulate. Their website will have information on the process for applying. Otherwise, you can contact the embassy or consulate for information. The following link contains a list of all Irish embassies and consulates: **www.dfa.ie/embassies/irish-embassies-abroad/**.

Applying for a Passport Online

You can renew your passport when you return to Ireland. It is possible to apply to renew your passport online. The **Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)** website contains information on how to apply online: **www.dfa.ie/passportonline/**.

If you want to apply to renew your passport (also known as passport book) online:

- You must be over eighteen
- Your name must be the same as on your previous passport
- Your previous Irish passport must have expired less than five years ago
- If you have an existing Irish passport it must have twelve months validity remaining
- Your existing passport number must begin with P or L and be followed by another letter and have seven numbers

You can also use the online service if you want to apply for a passport card or if your passport or passport card has been lost, stolen or damaged.

Applying by Post

If your passport expired more than five years ago, you will not be able to apply to renew it online. If you are not eligible to apply online or you do not wish to apply in this way, you can complete an application form and return it to the passport office. If you are in Ireland, you will need to use Form **APS 1** and you may get this form from your local post office, Garda station or library. You can also get the form from the passport offices in Dublin and Cork.

The post office provides a passport express service. If you need your passport quickly, you can call to any post office and complete the application form. There is an additional charge for this service.

You can find further information on all issues relating to Irish passports on the Department of Foreign Affairs website: **www.dfa.ie/passports-citizenship/top-passport-questions/**.

Passport Card

Most people returning to Ireland will be familiar with the passport (or passport book) but unless you have left Ireland since 2015 you will not be familiar with the passport card. If you have an Irish passport and are over eighteen you can apply for a passport card. It costs €35. It may be used for travel in the EU/EEA, the UK and Switzerland – you will not need your passport as well.

Public Services Card (PSC)

You will need a public services card (PSC) in order to access certain public services, including social welfare payments. You will also need the PSC to apply for a driving licence or learner permit. If you are issued with a PPS number (see above) you may also be issued with a PSC. If not, you must attend your local PSC Centre to apply for one. PSC Centres are located nationwide. Some offer a walk-in service and others are by appointment only. You can make an appointment directly with your local PSC Centre.

You will need to bring the following documents to the PSC Centre:

- Letter confirming appointment (if you received one)
- Public services card (if you have one)
- Proof of identity
- Proof of address

You should also bring your mobile phone (if you have one). This is so your number can be verified. You will need a mobile phone to access public services online.

Your identity will be verified when you attend the PSC Centre. This is known as a Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) registration.

Your public services card will be posted to you seven to ten days after you attend the PSC Centre.

Further information is available at: **https://www.gov.ie/en/service/make-a-public-service-card-psc-personal-public-service-number-ppsn-application-appointment** or through the **PSC Helpdesk** at: **0818 837 000**.

Driving Licence

You must have a valid driving licence to drive a vehicle on Irish roads. It is an offence not to have the correct licence for the vehicle you are driving.

The **National Driver Licence Service (NDLS)** processes applications for learner permits and driving licences. The NDLS website contains information about how to apply, what you need to apply and where you must go to make your application: **www.ndls.ie**.

Converting your Licence to an Irish Licence

If you have a UK/NI driving licence, it is not valid to drive in Ireland once you are a resident and must be exchanged for an Irish licence. If you already have a driving licence issued by an EU or EEA country* it is possible to exchange it for an Irish licence. It is also possible to exchange your licence if it was issued in certain other recognised states (these include some Canadian provinces, Australia, South Africa and South Korea). You can continue to drive on an EU/EEA licence until it expires. If you hold a licence from a recognised state and you have returned to Ireland permanently, you should apply to exchange your licence or apply for an Irish licence.

If your driving licence is from a country that is not recognised for licence exchange, you will not be able to exchange it for an Irish licence and will need to apply for an Irish licence as if you did not previously have a driving licence.

Applying for an Irish Driving Licence

If you want to apply for a driving licence and have not had one before or have a driving licence from a country not recognised for driving licence exchange, you will first need to pass the driver theory test then apply for a learner permit. You can apply online at www.ndls.ie or in person at any National Driver Licence Service Centre, which are located throughout Ireland. The

*EU: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. EEA: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

NDLS website provides information on the documentation you will need to have whether you are applying in person or online.

Once you have a learner permit, you will need to complete Essential Driver Training (EDT) before doing your driving test. Only once you have passed the driving test can you apply for a driving licence either online or in person at an NDLS Centre. You will also need to provide relevant documentation. See the NDLS website for further information: **https://www.ndls.ie/how-to-apply/applying-online.html** and **https://www.ndls.ie/how-to-apply/applying-in-person.html**.

Driving Offences Committed in other Countries

If you have been disqualified from driving in the UK (including Northern Ireland) since August 2017, your disqualification will also apply when you return to Ireland under the Mutual Recognition of Driving Disqualifications. This applies whether you have a UK or Irish driving licence and to disqualification for certain offences that involve reckless or dangerous driving, hit-and-run driving, driving a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, as well as speeding.

If you are disqualified in the UK because you accumulated penalty points, this is not included in the arrangements. The **Road Safety Authority (RSA)** website contains information on disqualification from driving in the UK: **https://www.rsa.ie/services/licensed-drivers/penalty-points/mutual-recognition-of-disqualifications-ireland-and-uk** They will also answer any questions you may have by email at: **info@rsa.ie**.

Returning to Northern Ireland – ID Documents

If you are returning to Northern Ireland, you will also need identity documents (ID) to apply for various services. You should start arranging ID before you leave prison if possible.

National Insurance (NI) Number

If you are returning to Northern Ireland and want to start work or apply for state benefits you will need a National Insurance (NI) number. If you have lived in Northern Ireland previously, you should have received an NI number when you turned sixteen. If you do not have an NI number, you can apply online at: **https://www.apply-national-insurance-number.service**.

gov.uk/apply/welcome. You can only access this site from the UK. You can get help with your application from the **National Insurance number application helpline** at: **0800 587 0024**.

However, if you no longer remember the number or are not sure if you had one previously, you can call the **National Insurance registration helpline** at **0300 200 3500** or **0044 191 203 7010** if you are outside the UK.

Passport

If you were born in Northern Ireland, you are entitled to an Irish and/or a British passport. The **NI Direct** website provides information on how to apply. It also provides relevant forms to download if you wish to apply for a British passport or renew your existing passport: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/passports**.

If you are applying for an Irish passport, you can apply online and get information on the documents you require at: **https://www.dfa.ie/passports/how-to-apply-for-a-passport/**.

If you live in Northern Ireland, you can apply for an Irish passport online or by using the passport postal service at some Post Office branches.

Birth Certificate

If you were born in Northern Ireland, you can get a copy of your birth certificate from the **General Register Office Northern Ireland (GRONI)** by calling into their office at:

General Register Office (GRO)
NISRA
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5RR

You can also order your certificate by phone on **0300 200 7890**, or from outside Northern Ireland on **0044 2891 513 101**, or online at: **geni.nidirect.gov.uk/BirthCertificate/ConfirmRegistration**.

Driving Licence in Northern Ireland

The **Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA)** is the agency responsible for licensing and testing vehicles and drivers in Northern Ireland. You can contact them on **0300 200 7861** or by email at: **dva@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk**.

Accommodation/Housing

Finding accommodation is one of the biggest challenges facing people returning to Ireland after being in prison abroad. There is currently a housing crisis in Ireland and this is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. Private rented accommodation is difficult to find and expensive, especially in cities and larger towns. Social or local authority housing is also scarce and there are long waiting lists in many counties. Even emergency accommodation can be difficult to come by.

If you have a conviction for particular offences (for example, sex offences) you may not be eligible for all types of accommodation.

Family and Friends

Family and friends may be able to offer you temporary accommodation when you are released if only for a short time while you get back on your feet. Many former prisoners returning to Ireland live with their family when they return. This can be a more supportive environment for you than living on your own.

However, it is not always easy, especially if you have not lived with them for a long time. You may want to consider:

- How you get along with your family
- Whether you will have your own space in the household
- Whether you or any of your family have addiction issues
- Your physical and mental health and that of family members

It is worth speaking to your family about some ground rules for living together, even if you are only going to be there for a short time.

Specialist Housing

There are a small number of housing schemes available for former prisoners and your ICPO caseworker will give you information about this before you are released. As places are limited, it is important that you let your ICPO caseworker know in good time if you do not think you will have a place to stay when you come home or if you have particular housing needs. **Note:** You must apply for this service before leaving prison.

Emergency Accommodation

If you will be homeless on your return to Ireland, you will need to apply for emergency accommodation and social housing with the local authority (i.e. the council) in the area you last lived or where you have a local connection (for example, you lived in the area continuously for at least five years previously, or you have a relative who has lived locally for at least two years, or you are attending employment/education/medical facility locally). For Dublin, contact the **Central Placement Service** on **1800 707 707** or go to **Parkgate Hall, 6–9 Conyngham Road, Dublin 8** (Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.). For anywhere outside Dublin, contact the relevant local authority. If you need further advice, contact **Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project** on **01 891 3050** or by email at: **irishdiasporasupport@crosscare.ie** (Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.). Your ICPO caseworker can also arrange an appointment for you.

Social Housing

Once you come back to Ireland you may be eligible to apply for social housing from the local authority. Local authorities (city or county councils) are the main providers of social housing for people who cannot afford their own home. You will need to apply to the local authority where you last lived and satisfy the criteria, including income (this can vary depending on where in Ireland you are), local connection and your need for housing. As social housing availability is limited, once you are accepted on the housing list, you can look for private rented accommodation and apply for a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) to help with the cost of your rent (see below).

Private Rented Accommodation

It is difficult for former prisoners returning to Ireland to find private rented accommodation, at least initially. You will generally need landlord references and have to pay a deposit and a month's rent in advance, which can be expensive. If you are in receipt of social welfare payments or on low pay and have a long-term housing need, you may be eligible for help with your rent through either Rent Supplement or Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). There are certain other criteria, such as being on the local authority housing list, and it is worth getting advice regarding your entitlements through **Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project** (**irishdiasporasupport@crosscare.ie**) or **Threshold** (**www.threshold.ie**).

It is illegal in Ireland for a landlord to refuse to accept a tenant because they are receiving rent allowance or other forms of social welfare. Under the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015, a landlord cannot discriminate against

you if you are receiving or seeking assistance in paying your rent through Rent Supplement or HAP.

If you are considering private rented accommodation, it is usually cheaper to share a house or a flat and living out of the city or town centre may also be cheaper.

There are certain minimum standards which private rented accommodation must meet and your landlord should be registered with the Residential Tenancies Board. You will also have other rights and obligations as a tenant. You will be expected to keep your accommodation in good condition and pay your rent on time. Your landlord may keep some or all of your deposit if you have rent arrears, unpaid bills, damage above normal wear and tear, or if you have not given enough notice when you leave.

Housing Assistance for Older Emigrants

Safe Home Ireland assists qualifying older Irish-born returning emigrants in accessing appropriate and secure accommodation for when they return to Ireland. To apply for housing via Safe Home Ireland, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Older Irish-born emigrants living abroad
- Aged 57+ years
- Capable of independent living
- Living in rented accommodation abroad and unable to provide accommodation for themselves (from their own income/ savings) on return to Ireland

Note: The accommodation in question is mainly provided via Housing Association schemes for older people. Access is through a limited concession open to qualifying older Irish-born emigrants only. It does not give Safe Home clients a priority over 'local' applicants.

It is important to contact Safe Home in good time before you are due to return to Ireland or ask your ICPO caseworker to contact them on your behalf. Safe Home's website contains further information: **https://safehomeireland.com**.

Housing Associations and Cooperatives

You may also be eligible for housing from a housing association. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to rent a home in the private sector or buy their own homes. There are housing associations and similar organisations called housing cooperatives throughout Ireland and your local authority can give you details of any housing associations in your area. You

must be registered on the local authority housing list in your area in order to be eligible to be housed by one of these agencies.

Charities working with Homeless People

If you do become homeless, even for a short time, there are charities throughout Ireland that can help you in various ways including by providing meals, clothing and showers as well as advice and support to find a home. Some organisations that work with homeless people are:

- **Merchants Quay Ireland** (**01 524 0160**): Among its services are a drop-in centre, a healthcare service, advice and information, and a counselling service for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Simon Community** (**www.simon.ie**): They work with homeless people throughout Ireland providing emergency accommodation and outreach services including a rough sleeper service and a soup run for people living on the street.
- **Focus Ireland** (**01 881 5900** and **help@focusireland.ie**): They work with homeless people throughout Ireland. They have an advice and information coffee shop in central Dublin.
- **DePaul Trust** (**01 453 7111** [Dublin] and **028 9064 7755** [Northern Ireland]): Manages accommodation and outreach services for people experiencing homelessness in Ireland.

Housing in Northern Ireland

Housing in Northern Ireland can be difficult to access so it is often best to try to stay with family or friends at least initially. It is worth considering your housing options carefully.

Housing Rights provides information about all types of housing available in Northern Ireland on their website: **https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice**. You can speak to an adviser on **028 9024 5640**.

Smartmove Housing is a charity that provides advice, support and accommodation to people who are homeless or need housing urgently. They operate throughout Northern Ireland and you can contact them by email at: **info@smartmove-housing.com**.

Extern supports people who are homeless or facing homelessness as well as people who are experiencing mental health issues and people who are experiencing problem drug and alcohol use or problem gambling. They also support people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. They provide services throughout Northern Ireland and you can contact them at: **0044 (0)28 90 840555**.

Financial Support

In some countries prisoners are given a small sum of money when they are released from prison. In the UK this is called a **one-off subsistence payment** (previously called a prison discharge grant) and is less than £80. Some people will also have had prison jobs and may have been able to save a small amount of money. You will need to make arrangements to collect this money before your release.

The ICPO can also provide a post-release grant of up to €200 and a post-release pack with basic necessities in certain circumstances. Your caseworker will give you further information about this.

Social Welfare Payments

You can apply for a social welfare payment on your return to Ireland. The social welfare system can be complex and it is worth getting advice from Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project or your local Citizens Information Centre before you apply. You will need a PPS number to apply. (For further information on PPS numbers, see chapter two.)

There are two main categories of social welfare payments in Ireland: 'benefits' and 'allowances'. Benefits are granted based on the social insurance contributions you made in Ireland in the past. Allowances are means-tested payments designed for people who do not have sufficient social insurance contributions to qualify for a benefit payment. In most cases, you must also satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) Ireland to qualify for allowance payments.

Means Test

When you apply for means-tested payments, you will be asked to complete an application form giving details of your sources of income. You may be interviewed by a social welfare inspector about your income and you may have to provide some documents that show your income, such as a bank statement. The social welfare inspector may visit your home. If your application is not successful, you may appeal.

Habitual Residence Condition

To qualify for most means-tested payment, you will also need to show that you are 'habitually resident' in Ireland on your return as part of the Habitual

Residence Condition (HRC). The HRC is a test to see if you have made Ireland your home. If you have lived in Ireland before and are returning for good or if you are being deported to Ireland, you should satisfy the HRC once you can show that you are resuming your residence in Ireland. As part of your social welfare application, you will need to complete the HRC1 form. On this form, you will be asked to provide personal details, including details of periods of residence abroad, employment history and information on your close family members in Ireland and abroad. If possible, you should include evidence of your release from prison and/or deportation back to Ireland. For assistance with your application, contact **Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project** on **01 891 3050** or by email at: **irishdiasporasupport@crosscare.ie** (Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.).

There are different types of social welfare payments in Ireland. The types of payments or the names of the payments may have changed since you left Ireland. Some of the main types of payment are as follows.

Jobseeker's Allowance

If you are under sixty-six and are looking for work, you may be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance. You should go to your local social welfare office to apply. To qualify for this allowance you must be able to work and be genuinely trying to find work.

Jobseeker's Allowance is a means-tested payment. Your income must be below a certain level for you to qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) will assess any sources of income you have, such as savings or income from property. The DSP will take into account your household income. If your income is below a certain level and you fulfil the other criteria, you will be eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance.

You will also need to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC). The HRC is a test to see if you have made Ireland your home. If you have lived in Ireland before and are returning for good or if you are being deported to Ireland, you should satisfy the HRC.

If you work part-time for up to three days a week, you may be entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance for the other days; however, you must show you are looking for full-time work.

Disability Allowance

If you are under sixty-six and have an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued, or may be expected to continue, for at least one year, you may be entitled to Disability Allowance. However, the injury, disease or disability must result in your being *substantially restricted* in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for you. You must also pass the means test and satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition.

To apply you will need to complete an application form which you can get at your local Intreo Centre or social welfare branch office. You will also need your GP to complete a medical report, which is part of the application form describing your medical condition. For further information see the Disability Allowance Section Homepage: **www.gov.ie/en/service/df6811-disability-allowance**.

State Pension

You may be eligible for a State Pension (Contributory) if you are over sixty-six and worked in Ireland and paid social insurance contributions. The way contributions are calculated is not easy to understand so it is worth getting advice from your local Citizens Information Centre or the **Citizens Information Phone Service** (CIPS on **0818 074 000** or **00353 21 229 8187** from outside Ireland). This is not means tested.

If you are over sixty-six but have not worked at all in Ireland or only worked for a short time, you may be entitled to the State Pension (Non-Contributory). To qualify for this payment you must meet the Habitual Residence Condition and pass the means test. To apply, you will need to complete the application form: **www.welfare.ie/en/pdf/spnc1.pdf**.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance

You may qualify for Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) if you have applied for a social welfare payment and you are waiting to receive your first payment and you have no other income. If you find work you may also be entitled to SWA while you wait for your first salary. This allowance is means tested and you can apply at your local Intreo Centre or social welfare office.

Additional Needs Payments

This payment may be available to you if you have essential expenses that you cannot pay for from your weekly income. You may be eligible for this whether

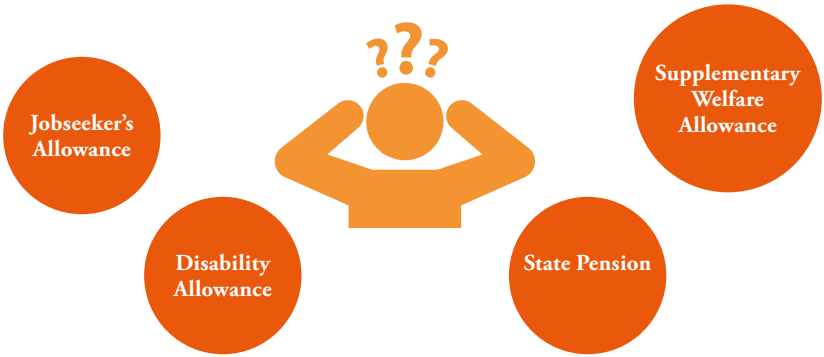
you are receiving social welfare or in low paid work. Essential expenses include repairs to property, replacing furniture or household appliances, increased costs of electricity and heating and deposits for private rental accommodation. For further information, go to: **https://www.gov.ie/en/service/4eb45-additional-needs-payment/**.

Family Payments

If you are returning to Ireland with your family, there are some social welfare payments aimed at families. The **Citizens Information** website contains information on these payments: **https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/**. Your local Citizens Information Centre can advise you further.

Change of Circumstances

You must always tell the Department of Social Protection if there are any changes to your circumstances while you are getting payments from them.



Welfare Payments in Northern Ireland

You may be entitled to state welfare payments when you return to Northern Ireland. It is worth getting further information and advice before you apply.
NIACRO provides welfare advice specially for people leaving prison. Their website contains further information about their services: **www.niacro.co.uk/welfare-advice**.

Your local **Citizens Advice** can also advise you regarding welfare payments. You can find the branch nearest to you at: **https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/**.

Accessing Medical Care

Being in prison can have a damaging effect on your physical and mental health. Conditions in prison (for example, overcrowding, poor diet and little exercise) may also result in health problems, or make existing health conditions worse. Healthcare in prison varies considerably and some people may not have received adequate medical, psychiatric or dental treatment when in prison. It is important to visit a GP as soon as possible after returning to Ireland.

If you are taking medicines prescribed for you while in prison, you should be given a supply to cover you until you can visit a GP in Ireland.

Accessing Medical Services

You can access public health services once you are 'ordinarily resident' in Ireland, meaning you have been living in Ireland for at least one year or if you intend to live in Ireland for at least one year. The starting point for most medical services in Ireland is through your local GP/doctor.

Emergency Medical Treatment

If you need urgent medical treatment on arrival in Ireland, especially if you arrive at the weekend or late at night, you can go to the accident and emergency department of most major hospitals. There are often long queues and you will be prioritised on the basis of medical need. You may have to wait for treatment if you have a non-urgent injury or illness.

If you are referred to the accident and emergency service by a GP, you will not have to pay for treatment; however, if you use this service without being referred, you must pay a charge of €100. Certain groups do not have to pay the charge, including medical card holders, women receiving maternity services, and children with certain illnesses and disabilities.

Safetynet GP/Medical Services

Safetynet is a charity that delivers medical care to people who do not have access to healthcare, including people who are homeless. They provide services mainly in the Dublin area. If you are returning to Ireland and cannot afford a GP on return and do not yet have a medical card, you can make

an appointment to see a Safetynet doctor. You can contact them for general enquiries on **087 152 3589** or by email at: **info@primarycaresafetynet.ie**.

Medical Card

You will be eligible to apply for a medical card if you are ordinarily resident in Ireland and your weekly income is below a certain amount for your family size. This is generally the case if your only income is from social welfare payments.

If you have a medical card, you will be entitled to a range of services, including the following:

- Free general practitioner (GP or family doctor) services
- Prescribed drugs and medicines (subject to a small charge)
- Public hospital services
- Dental, optical and aural services
- Community care and personal social services

Note: You will be eligible for maternity and infant care services irrespective of whether you have a medical card or not.

How to Apply for a Medical Card

You can apply online at: **www.medicalcard.ie**. You can complete a Medical Card and GP Visit Application form, which you can download at: **https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/medical-cards/applying/apply/**. or get from the Local Health Office for your area. If you do not know where these services are located you can find them at: **https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/** or in appendix two at the end of this booklet.

If you have any questions about your application you can:

- Phone: **0818 224 478**
- Contact your local health office
- Email: **clientregistration@hse.ie**

You must find a GP that will accept you as a patient and sign the form. Not all GPs participate in the medical card scheme and a list of participating GPs is available from your local health centre or local health office for the area where you live. The GP's surgery should be within seven miles of where you live.

Sometimes the GP you choose will not be able to accept you as a patient; for example, if they are already full. If you are refused by three GPs, you should include this in your application form for a medical card and a GP will be allocated to you by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The medical card is means tested. Your weekly income must be below a certain amount and the HSE will assess your income, savings, marital status and dependants.

If you do not qualify for a medical card (for example, if you have a job and your income is above the threshold), you will be assessed for a **GP visit card**. If you have a GP visit card, you can visit a participating GP for free but it does not cover prescriptions or hospital charges.

Note: If you do not have either a medical card or a GP card, you will have to pay for any visits to the GP. GP visits usually cost between €55 to €85 per person.

Change in Circumstances

If your circumstances change (for example, if you get a job), you should notify the HSE. If you are unemployed and you are returning to full-time or part-time work, you can keep your medical card for three years in certain circumstances.

HIV/AIDS

If you are affected by HIV/AIDS there are organisations throughout Ireland that can provide information, support and counselling to you. Further information is available at: **www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health/sexually-transmitted-infections/types-of-stis/hiv.pdf**.

HIV Ireland provides support, information and advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS. They also provide referral services and you can contact them at: **01 873 3799** or **info@hivireland.ie**.

The GUIDE Clinic at St James' Hospital in Dublin is the largest, free STI, HIV and Infectious Disease service in Ireland. Their contact number is **01 416 2315** and you can find more information at: **www.guideclinic.ie**.

Healthcare in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the National Health Service (NHS) health services and social services provided by local authorities are combined under Health and Social Care. This is a free service for users but you may have to pay some prescription, dental and other charges. If you have returned to Northern Ireland you can register with a GP. If you do not know any GPs in your area, you can search online for a surgery near you: **https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/gp-practices**. This service will also help you find other health services in your area.

You will need to contact the surgery you would like to register with and make sure that it covers your area. The surgery will ask you to complete a registration form and may ask to see your proof of identity and address. Generally the surgery will accept you unless they are full or you live too far away.

CHAPTER SIX

Mental Health

Some people leave prison with mental health issues. Some had mental illnesses before going to prison and received little or no treatment while they were there or their mental health was negatively affected by prison life. Some prisoners develop mental health problems while in prison. Some prisoners receive medication for diagnosed mental illness while in prison but very little counselling or other talking therapies.

People in prison often live in an environment where intimidation and violence are commonplace and this can lead to increased levels of anxiety. The repeated use of solitary confinement, overcrowding in the prison and drug use can also contribute to mental health problems.

Sometimes people leaving prison avoid seeking medical help due to the stigma or they believe that their mental health will improve once they leave prison; however, there is no shame in seeking help. Speak to your GP or you can see a counsellor for talking therapy. Your GP can refer you to counselling or you can contact the organisations below.

You may also find that you can get over feelings of depression and anxiety with time. Meditation and regular exercise can help and sometimes activities like volunteering can be useful.

Depression

If you are experiencing the following and they are interfering with your life, you may be suffering from depression and you should consider seeking help:

- Feeling tired, listless and not motivated
- Loss of appetite, eating too much or comfort eating
- Unable to sleep or sleeping too much
- Negative thoughts including thinking about suicide
- Inability to enjoy yourself

Counselling – How Can It Help You?

Many people leaving prison find that counselling helps in coping with resettlement and addressing past hurt and abuse. Some people will have had the opportunity to avail of counselling in prison but others will not. You should not feel embarrassed at seeking help.

Counselling can help you:

- Learn how to cope well with stressful situations
- Cope with difficulties you will face rebuilding your life back in Ireland
- Get close to your family again after time spent apart
- Learn how to make better life choices and not repeat mistakes you made in the past
- Address feelings of loneliness, rejection, hopelessness and anger

How to Find Counselling Services

Your GP can refer you to counselling and other mental health supports. The **HSE Your Mental Health information line** at **1800 111 888** can give you information about mental health supports and services available to you and how to access services provided by or funded by the HSE.

Helplines

If you feel depressed or suicidal and would like someone to talk to, there are a number of helplines that you can contact. As well as providing a listening service, they will also be able to give you more information and direct you to other services. Some of these helplines are listed on page 37.

Samaritans

Samaritans provide a listening service and will give you an opportunity to talk about any thoughts or feelings you have, whatever they may be.
Contact them here:
Phone: 116 123
Email: jo@samaritans.ie

Aware

Aware works with people who are experiencing depression and bipolar disorder.
Contact them here:
Phone: 1800 80 48 48
Email: supportmail@aware.ie

Pieta House

Pieta House works with people with suicidal ideation or who are self-harming.
Contact them here:
Crisis Helpline: 1800 247 247

Mental Health Service in Northern Ireland

You can find information about mental health services in Northern Ireland at: **https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-services**.

There are also a number of helplines available that you can contact in Northern Ireland to talk through your problems or get help and support.

Lifeline

Helpline: 0808 808 8000 **(24 hour crisis helpline)**

Samaritans

Helpline: 028 9066 4422

Aware

Email: www.aware-ni.org/contact-us.html
Phone: 028 9035 7820

If you need other mental health services or counselling, please see: **www.mindingyourhead.info/services**.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Addiction

If drug or alcohol use is a problem for you, help is available and there are organisations that can support you when you return to Ireland.

Life can be very stressful after release and it can be difficult to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Factors which can lead to relapse include:

- Meeting old friends who still use drugs or are dealers
- Living in or spending time in areas where you previously used
- Feeling stressed, anxious, frustrated, angry, etc.
- When things are not going the way you had hoped or it is taking longer than anticipated to get your life back on track
- Family issues and disagreements within the family

It can be difficult to cope without drugs and alcohol when you return to Ireland, especially if coming home is proving more challenging than you had thought. Although drugs and alcohol may give you temporary relief, they can make certain things worse. Your mental and physical health can be adversely affected, family life and relationships can be more difficult to maintain and it can be more difficult to hold down a job and stay in training.

Services to Help You

There are many organisations providing services to people who struggle with drug and alcohol use. Your GP or local health office (see appendix two for a list of all local health offices in Ireland) can help you find drug and alcohol services. You will be assessed and your treatment options will be explained to you.

There are a range of different treatment options available, such as residential care and outpatient programmes. Some will provide continuing support while you are recovering and also support your family. It is, therefore, best to discuss your options with your GP or local health office.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides a range of services for people who experience difficulties with drugs and alcohol use:

Health Service Executive (HSE) Drugs and Alcohol Helpline

The **HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline** provides support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to drug and alcohol use. The helpline also provides information and support on HIV and sexual health. The helpline will give you the chance to discuss your options and receive support and advice.

The helpline is free and confidential:
Helpline: 1800 459 459
Email: helpline@hse.ie

Drugs and Alcohol Information and Support

Drugs.ie provides details of the alcohol and drugs services throughout Ireland.
Website: www.services.drugs.ie

Al-Anon Family Group

Provides help and friendship for families and friends of problem drinkers.
Phone:
Helpline: 01 873 2699
Email: info@alanon.ie

Rise Foundation

Family programmes and counselling for families affected by addictive behaviour.
Phone: 01 764 5131
Email: support@therisefoundation.ie

Gambling

Gambling can be an enjoyable and tempting pastime, but it may be addictive and costly and can never be a solution to money problems. If you spend more money and time on gambling than you can afford to; lie about gambling to your family or friends; hide your gambling from other people; borrow money or sell possessions to pay for gambling; neglect your work or family responsibilities because of gambling; are stressed or cannot sleep because of gambling; or have considered doing something that is illegal to finance your gambling, you may have a gambling problem. Help, advice and support is available to you.

Gamblers Anonymous Ireland

Gamblers Anonymous Ireland is a support organisation for people who want to stop gambling.
Dublin: 01 872 1133

Cork: 087 285 9552

Galway: 086 349 4450

Tipperary: 085 783 1045

Kerry: 087 426 6633

Waterford: 087 185 0294

Email: info@gamblersanonymous.ie

The **National Gambling Helpline** is free and confidential:
Helpline: 0808 8020 133

Addiction Services in Northern Ireland

There is a range of services that provide treatment, support and information to people who have drug or alcohol issues in Northern Ireland. These agencies provide different services and it is advisable to speak with your GP about the best service for you.

Addiction NI is a drug and alcohol treatment charity and will provide counselling, support and treatment to people who are experiencing addiction to drugs or alcohol. You can contact them at:
Phone: 028 9066 4434
Email: enquiries@addictionni.com

Gamblers Anonymous Ireland
Phone: Belfast: 048 9024 9185
Email: gabelfast@gmail.com

Full details of the various services available in Northern Ireland can be found here: **https://drugsandalcoholni.info/**.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Money Management

Managing money is one of the most important resettlement challenges you will face. If you have been in prison for a while, the price of everything will have gone up a lot since you were last in Ireland. It is a good idea to make a budget every week so you will not get into debt.

Put money aside for bills each week. If you can't afford to pay a bill, call the company and explain. You may be able to get the cost spread out over a longer time. Be aware that if you keep putting off paying bills you will get further into debt.

If you are in debt, help is available. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a free and confidential service for people who are having problems with debt and managing their money.

MABS money advisers can help you with:

- Dealing with your debts and planning a budget
- Reviewing your income to ensure that you are not missing any entitlements
- Contacting organisations to which you might owe money to make arrangements for payment

The **MABS Helpline** is open Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on **0818 072 000**. MABS services are available at sixty locations throughout Ireland where you can meet a money adviser.

After you get settled back in Ireland, it is advisable to try to save some money each week even if it is a very small amount. Many areas have a local credit union through which you can save small amounts regularly. A credit union is a member-owned financial cooperative and in addition to saving money you may be able to borrow money, depending on your level of saving. You will need to show that you can pay it back. There are credit unions throughout Ireland and the **Irish League of Credit Unions** website will help you find the nearest one to you: **www.creditunion.ie/creditunionlocator**. You can contact them by email at: **info@creditunion.ie** or call them on **01 614 6700**.

Budgeting

It is useful to make a weekly budget if you are living on a low income. It is useful to collect all your receipts to see what you spend in a week and if you exceed your budget, consider ways of cutting down spending on some items.

There are many ways you can save money – some of the following may be helpful:

- Buy second-hand clothes and goods. There are charity shops in most towns and cities and they often have good quality clothing and small household goods
- Avoid takeaways and convenience stores
- Do not buy things that you do not immediately need and do not impulse buy
- Bring a list of what you need to the supermarket and do not buy additional items
- Try to cook for yourself if possible and do not rely on ready-made meals as these can work out expensive

Insurance

When you return to Ireland, you may wish to take out insurance. Many insurance companies ask about criminal conviction because they believe it is relevant in assessing risk. The most common types of personal insurance are: motor insurance; home insurance; travel insurance; health insurance.

While most types of insurance are not compulsory in Ireland, it is important to note that it is a criminal offence to drive without insurance. The **Citizens Information** website contains general information about insurance: **www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money_and_tax/personal_finance/insurance**.

You can also get information regarding insurance from your local Citizens Information Service (CIS). The **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)** provides information on the different types of insurance and on getting a quote: **www.ccpc.ie/consumers/money/insurance**.

Disclosing a Conviction for the Purposes of Insurance

You should disclose any criminal convictions you have when applying for insurance. It is important to remember that Ireland's spent conviction legislation, the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 applies only to certain convictions obtained in Ireland and you should, therefore, disclose any convictions you received abroad. It is very important to answer any questions asked about your conviction(s) honestly and accurately.

If you do not do so, the insurance company can refuse insurance cover, or if you have an insurance policy, it may be cancelled or the insurer may not pay out on any claim you may have. This could have very serious consequences for you as it may mean being unable to repair your home or to replace your car if damaged. If you move in with your family, it may be necessary for them to update their home insurance for the same reasons.

If you disclose a conviction, the insurer may refuse to offer you insurance, or charge you a higher premium or impose additional conditions. However, there is no standard approach to convictions among insurers and you may have to approach a number of insurers. The nature of the offence may also be relevant to the type of insurance required; for example, non-motoring offences may be less relevant when applying for motor insurance.

Most insurance policies contain limits and exceptions and you should read the policy to be sure you are aware of what your policy does and does not cover. You should also check any assumptions referred to on the website, information materials or application form. These may contain an assumption that the person applying for insurance does not have a conviction – depending on the company or type of insurance being applied for this can be any conviction or a specific type of conviction relating to crimes such as arson, damage to property and fraud.

Declined Cases Agreement

If you are refused insurance cover, it is important to keep details of the companies you have contacted and the reasons they have given for refusal. Insurance Ireland operates a Declined Cases Agreement with which all motor insurers in Ireland have agreed. If anyone seeking insurance has been refused three times, the insurer first approached will be required to provide the individual with a quote so it is important to keep records of the order in which you approached the insurers. There is further information available at: **https://www.insuranceireland.eu/consumer-information/general-non-life-insurance/declined-cases-agreement** and you can contact them for assistance at: **declined@insuranceireland.eu**.

Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding your insurance policy, you may contact the **Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO)**. You should raise any complaint with your insurer before contacting the FSPO.

FSPO
Lincoln House
Lincoln Place
Dublin
D02 VH29
Tel: 01 567 7000
Email: info@fspo.ie

Your Household

The requirement to disclose your convictions does not apply only to your own insurance cover but also to that of family members if you are living in their household. Many insurers will ask if the person applying for insurance or anyone living with them has a conviction. Similarly, if you are a named driver on the policy of a family member or other person they must also disclose your criminal conviction(s).

If you return home to live with your family even on a temporary basis, they should check in particular their household policy as they may be required to inform their insurance provider as soon as you come to live with them.

Returning to Northern Ireland

Money Management

You can get advice and help with budgeting and dealing with debt from **Advice NI**. They have centres throughout Northern Ireland and you can find the one nearest to you on their website: **www.adviceni.net** or by calling **0800 915 4604** or emailing **advice@adviceni.net**.
You can find other information on managing your money at:
http://www.adviceni.net/money-debt/money-talks-help-guides.

Insurance

If you need information or advice about insurance, you may contact the following organisations:

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)
Amelia House
4 Amelia Street
Belfast BT2 7GS
Tel: 028 9032 0157
Email: niacro@niacro.co.uk

Advice NI
Tel: 0800 915 4604
Email: advice@adviceni.net

CHAPTER NINE

Employment, Education and Training

Getting a job when you return to Ireland after serving your sentence can be difficult. The skills you had before you went into prison may be out of date and your criminal record may mean that the range of jobs open to you is more limited. However, many people returning to Ireland after serving a sentence overseas find work and you can increase your chance of finding a job by getting advice and help and preparing in advance.

What Can You Do While Still in Prison?

- It is important to take advantage of any opportunities to learn new skills and gain new qualifications. Bring any certificates of qualification you get with you when you are released.
- You should also try to find work in the prison. Regular work can show that you are reliable and can also get you used to working, even if it is not the type of work you hope to do when you come back to Ireland.
- You should ask about any courses the prison run to help prisoners write CVs (resumes) and cover letters.
- Ask family and friends to look out for work for you – many people find work through people they know.

Benefits of Work

It can take time and effort to find work and you might have some setbacks along the way but it is important not to get disheartened. There are a lot of positives to having a job:

- Having a regular income to support yourself
- Meeting new people
- Being able to move on with your life and focus on the present and future rather than the past
- Keeping busy and developing a new routine
- Having a sense of achievement

Where to Find Work

There are many ways to find work in Ireland. The following are just some.

Intreo Centre/Social Welfare Branch Office

Intreo is a service from the Department of Social Protection that provides a single point of contact for all employment and income supports. It provides information and advice for people looking for work including a jobseeker information pack, courses and back-to-work supports: **https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/3c095-intreo-the-public-employment-services/**.

Websites: There are a number of websites that list jobs available in Ireland. People looking for work can put their CV on some of these websites and employers can access the CVs through this database and contact a jobseeker directly. The following are some of the jobs websites in Ireland:

- **Jobs Ireland: www.jobsireland.ie**
- **Jobs.ie: www.jobs.ie**
- **IrishJobs.ie: www.irishjobs.ie**
- **Indeed: www.indeed.com**
- **Monster.ie: www.monster.ie**

Newspapers: Some local and national newspapers have classified jobs sections. This might be particularly useful if you are looking for work outside Dublin or the main cities.

Notices: Jobs are often advertised on community noticeboards, in supermarkets, libraries and sometimes in shop and restaurant windows.

Recruitment agencies: These are often good if you are looking for a specific type of job or a job in a particular sector.

Personal networks: Family, friends and other people you know in your community are often a good source of information about job vacancies.

Volunteering

Sometimes it's hard to find work without recent experience. It is worth considering looking for volunteer work to gain extra experience and get used to working again. It is also a good way of getting to know more people and if you do well in the volunteer job, getting a reference. **Volunteer Ireland** can provide you with more information about volunteering: **www.volunteer.ie**.

Education and Training

There is a range of vocational training and apprenticeship schemes available throughout Ireland. You can receive information and advice on these schemes from your local employment or Intreo office.

The Citizens Information website provides information on these courses as well as on third level courses and returning to education: **www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education**. Your local Citizens Information Centre will let you know what is available locally.

Spent Convictions

Many countries have legislation providing for spent convictions. This means that if a certain time has gone by since the conviction, the conviction can be regarded as spent and you will not usually have to disclose it. Usually there are limitations in relation to the type of offence, the length of sentence and the length of time since the offence was committed.

Ireland introduced legislation on spent convictions in 2016 (Criminal Justice [Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures] Act 2016) but it only applies to convictions handed down by courts in Ireland (generally the district court and circuit court).

If you have been convicted of an offence outside Ireland but return to Ireland to live and work, legislation in relation to spent convictions in the country where you were sentenced will not apply in Ireland and you must disclose all convictions when asked by a potential employer.

Disclosing Your Conviction

You should disclose any criminal convictions when applying for jobs if asked. You are not obliged to provide information about your offence(s) if you have not been asked about them. If you do not disclose an offence when asked, no matter how minor or long ago, you run the risk of being dismissed if it comes to light at a future date.

People that have a criminal conviction are sometimes worried that if they admit they have a conviction they will not be considered for the position. There is always a risk but some employers will appreciate your honesty.

Finding Employment and Education in Northern Ireland

There are many ways of finding work in Northern Ireland.

You can get information about available jobs at your local Jobs and Benefits office at: **https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-and-benefits-offices**.

There are a number of other jobs websites including:
NIACRO provides support and assistance to former prisoners in relation to employment. These services are limited and you should contact NIACRO to see what may be available for you. They can be contacted at **028 9032 0157 (Belfast)**, **028 3833 1168 (Portadown)** and **028 7126 1941 (Derry)**.

Other ways of finding jobs are:

- Recruitment agencies (further information about registering with a recruitment agency is available here: **www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/recruitment-agencies**)
- Newspapers
- Friends, family and other acquaintances
- Jobs websites

Appendix One | Organisations Providing Services to Former Prisoners

In addition to ICPO, there is a range of agencies that can provide advice, information and support to you when you return to Ireland. Some of these organisations provide services specifically for people who have served a prison sentence and others provide general assistance to returning emigrants or to the wider public.

Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project

Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project provides information, advocacy and referral support in-person, by phone/email and online at: **www.diasporasupport.ie**. The service is open to anyone, but places particular emphasis on supporting those who are marginalised or in vulnerable situations, including returning former prisoners. Crosscare Irish Diaspora Support Project is based in Dublin but can provide advice throughout Ireland. Tel: **01 891 3050** or email: **irishdiasporasupport@crosscare.ie**.

Cork Alliance Centre

The Cork Alliance Centre provides a holistic service to people who have been in prison and supports them to change and progress in their lives and integrate into society. The centre works with people in the Cork area and is at Robert Scott House, 6 St Patrick's Quay, Cork, T23 Y2EA; open Monday to Thursday, 8.30 a.m.–5.30 p.m. and Friday, 8.30 a.m.–2 p.m. You can phone for an appointment at: **021 455 7878**.

Bedford Row Family Project

Based in Limerick, the Bedford Row Family Project supports families affected by the imprisonment of one or more of the members of the family, and works towards the reintegration of ex-prisoners into their families, their communities, and society in general. Bedford Row offers support and counselling services to family members and supports people who have been in prison to reintegrate. Tel: **061 315 332** or email: **info@bedfordrow.ie**.

St Nicholas Trust

The St Nicholas Trust is based in Cork and offers help and support to anybody affected by imprisonment – in particular the families of prisoners. The group meets in Cork city centre on a regular basis; they run a family support group where people can come to talk in a

safe, confidential, non-judgemental environment to people who have been through the same experience. Phone: **086 1768 266** or **086 1768 267**. Email: **stnicholastrust@gmail.com**.

NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders)

NIACRO works with people who have been in prison across Northern Ireland and provides a range of services supporting former prisoners in the community, including intensive resettlement support, information and support in relation to employment and disclosure and welfare advice. They also support the families of prisoners. Tel: **028 9032 0157** or email: **niacro@niacro.co.uk**.

Care After Prison

Care After Prison is a peer-led charity organisation which provides information, support and referral for people who have been released from prison, their families, and victims of crime. The service offers ex-offenders a safe environment to identify areas within their lives where support is needed to continue with their goal of leading crime-free lives.

As part of CAP's information and support service, they work closely with the families and loved ones of people under sentence and awaiting sentencing. Tel: **01 472 0973** or email: **info@careafterprison.ie**.

U-Casadh Project

The U-Casadh Project works with people who have been in prison in Waterford and helps them reintegrate into society by offering practical support. U-Casadh helps ex-prisoners get access to training, education and development programmes. Tel: **051 830 022**.

PACE

PACE provides training and accommodation facilities for people who have been released from prison, and provides a link between their life in prison and their new life in the wider community. PACE Priorswood House provides accommodation and support for adult men leaving custody or on probation service supervision. PACE also provides prevention services. Tel: **01 823 1000** or email: **headoffice@paceorganisation.ie**
Note: You must be referred to this service before you leave prison.

Safe Home Ireland

Safe Home provides housing for older Irish-born emigrants. It can also provide the following supports:

- An information and advice service for anyone (regardless of age or circumstances) who may be contemplating returning or moving to Ireland

- An outreach and advisory service for people who have returned home on accessing services and rights
- A monthly newsletter offering useful information for people considering returning or moving to Ireland

Tel: **098 36036** or email: **info@safehomeireland.com**.
Note: As Safe Home's accommodation service is in strong demand, you should contact them or ask your ICPO caseworker to do so before you are released from prison.

TRAIL

Trail provides accommodation and resettlement services to high-risk people with convictions. Trail is part of the Peter McVerry Trust (PMVT), which provides a range of services to people who are homeless. The PMVT can be contacted at: Phone: **01 823 0776** or email: **info@pmvtrust.ie**.
Note: You must be referred to this service while still in prison.

Tus Nua

Tus Nua provides accommodation and resettlement services to women who have been in prison, leaving the Dóchas Centre or on probation service supervision, who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Tel: **01 453 7111** or email: **depaul@depaulcharity.net**.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)

CoSA is a support service for sex offenders. It consists of an inner circle made up of volunteers in the community offering to support to a 'core member' on a weekly basis for a specified period. Phone: **01 823 1000** or email: **cosa@paceorganisation.ie**.

Appendix Two | Local Health Offices

Carlow/Kilkenny
Local Health Offices
Primary Care Centre, Shamrock Plaza, Green Lane, Carlow
Tel: 056 773 2000
Kilkenny Community Care, James's Green, Kilkenny
Tel: 056 778 4600

Cavan/Monaghan
Local Health Office
Cavan and Monaghan Public Health Nursing Service
16 Townhall Street, Cavan, Co. Cavan
Tel: 049 435 3747 or 049 437 3748
Monaghan PCCC Office, Saint Davnet's Hospital Complex, Rooskey, Monaghan **Tel:** 047 30400

Clare
Local Health Office
Ennis Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
Tel: 065 686 2700

Cork North Lee
Local Health Office
St Finbarr's Hospital, Douglas Road, Cork **Tel:** 021 496 6555

Cork South Lee
Local Health Office
St Finbarr's Hospital, Douglas Road, Cork **Tel:** 021 496 5511

Cork West
Local Health Office
Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Tel: 028 40400

Cork North
Local Health Office
Floor 2, Mallow Primary Health Care Centre, Mallow, Co. Cork
Tel: 022 58700

Donegal
Local Health Office
Donegal PCCC HQ, St Joseph's Hospital, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal
Tel: 074 9131391

Dublin North
Local Health Office
Cromcastle Road, Coolock, Dublin 5 **Tel:** 01 9214 200

Dublin North Central
Local Health Office
Civic Centre, Ballymun, Dublin 11
Tel: 01 846 7000

Dublin South City
Local Health Office
City Lodge
Old Meath Hospital
Heytesbury Street, Dublin 8
Tel: 01 708 5700

Dublin South East
Local Health Office
Vergemount Hall, Clonskeagh, Dublin 6 **Tel:** 01 268 0300

Dublin West
Local Health Office
Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Tel: 01 620 6000

Dublin North West
Local Health Office
HSE Dublin North West LHO, Ground Floor, Unit 4 & 5, Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
Tel: 01 897 5101

Dublin South West
Local Health Office
Hawthorn House, Millennium Park, Osberstown, Naas, Co. Kildare

Dún Laoghaire
Local Health Office
Tivoli Road, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin **Tel:** 01 284 3579

Galway
Local Health Office
25 Newcastle Road, Galway
Tel: 091 523 122

Kerry
Local Health Offices
HSE South, Rathass, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Tel: 066 718 4500
19 Denny Street, Tralee
Tel: 066 718 4500
24 Denny Street, Tralee
Tel: 066 718 4571/066 718 4500

Kildare and West Wicklow
Local Health Office
St Mary's, Craddockstown Road, Naas
Tel: 045 920 000

Limerick
Local Health Office
HSE, Ballycummin Avenue, Raheen Business Park, Limerick
Tel: 061 483 719

Longford/Westmeath
Local Health Office
Health Centre, Mullingar
Tel: 044 43 53700

Louth
Local Health Office
Louth Community Care Services, Dublin Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth
Tel: 042 933 2287

Meath
Local Health Office
County Clinic, Navan, Co. Meath
Tel: 046 902 1595

Roscommon
Local Health Office
Community Services, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
Tel: 090 666 5000

Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan
Local Health Offices
Community Services, Markievicz House, Co. Sligo
Tel: 071 915 5100
Community Services, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
Tel: 071 932 1400

North Tipperary/East Limerick
Local Health Office
Tyone Health Centre, Tyone, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
Tel: 067 46400

Tipperary South
Local Health Office
Western Road, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

Waterford
Local Health Office
Waterford Community Services, Cork Road, Waterford **Tel:** 051 842 800

Wexford
Local Health Office
Community Services Offices, Grogan's Road, George's Street and Slaney House, Wexford
Tel: 053 912 3522

Wicklow
Local Health Office
Corporation Lands, Wicklow, Co. Wicklow
Tel: 0404 68400

ICPO
PO Box 13484, Maynooth, Co. Kildare,
Republic of Ireland

T: +353 1 505 3156
F: +353 1 629 2363
E: info@icpo.ie
W: www.icpo.ie
X (Twitter): @ICPOprisoners

ICPO
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

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