

## **Approved Premises (APs)**

This information sheet is for people expecting to go to an Approved Premises after release from prison.

### **What are Approved Premises?**

Approved Premises (APs) are premises approved under Section 13 of the Offender Management Act 2007. They provide intensive supervision for those who present a high or very high risk of serious harm.

They are mostly used for people on licence, but they also accommodate small numbers of people on bail or community sentences.

Approved Premises play a role in monitoring and managing the risk of their residents. They also provide key workers and a programme of purposeful activity that is intended to help with reducing re-offending and reintegration into society.

Approved Premises are part of the Community Accommodation Services (CAS) which provides short-term accommodation for those who do not have suitable accommodation. You may hear Approved Premises referred to as 'CAS-1'.

### **Why might I have to go to an AP?**

Your offender manager can include residing in Approved Premises as part of the residence conditions of your licence. They might do this if they think it will help to manage any risks when you return to the community.

Refusing to do stay at an Approved Premises would be considered a breach of your licence and you could be recalled to prison. There is more information in the *Licence Conditions Policy Framework*.

PI 32/2014 *Approved Premises* contains guidelines for probation staff about making referrals. It suggests that referrals should be made sparingly and with careful consideration.

There are a number of things they should consider, including

- how the placement would contribute to managing risk and reintegration back into the community

- which premises and location would be suitable, and if the location would disrupt resettlement and/or continuity of support for health
- if the expected benefits are realistic in a short time
- alternatives that may be able to manage risks and needs should always be explored, including curfews and electronic monitoring.
- if you have already demonstrated compliance through open conditions and ROTL

### **Can I appeal the decision?**

If you are aware that you are being referred to an Approved Premises for your release and are not happy about it, you can contact your offender manager to discuss it.

If you are hoping to stay elsewhere, like returning to live with family or friends, you should explain why you think this would be better for your rehabilitation – for example if people that you will be living with or near will be able to offer support.

If the Approved Premises you are being referred to is far away from your local area and will disrupt your employment, move on opportunities or access to healthcare, you should tell them this as well.

Even after you have shared your concerns with your offender manager, they can still decide to refer you to an Approved Premises. There is no formal way to appeal this.

However, if you do not feel that your offender manager is taking all aspects into account, or if you are struggling to make contact to discuss the issue, you may wish to make a complaint to your probation service. Ask probation staff for details or contact our Advice and Information Service for more details.

### **What will happen when I first get there?**

When you first get to the hostel you will be given an induction. This includes being shown around, meeting staff and having hostel rules explained to you.

### **What support will I get whilst I am at an Approved Premises?**

You will be allocated a keyworker. Your keyworker will meet with you regularly to discuss what support you need and what you should be doing. You can also ask other staff for support when you need it.

You will be able to get support with things such as employment, housing, health issues, drug and alcohol problems and accessing education.

You will also have regular contact with your offender manager during your stay.

## **Do I have to pay to stay in Approved Premises?**

You will have to pay maintenance charges whilst staying in an Approved Premises. These cover some of the costs of living whilst you are there such as catering.

The amount will differ depending on whether the Premises is catering or self-catering.

## **What are the rules in Approved Premises?**

Whilst staying in an Approved Premises you will be asked to follow certain rules. Each hostel will have its own house rules. There are also standard rules listed in Annex C of the *Community Accommodation Service Tier 1 (CAS1) - Approved Premises Policy Framework*. We have included this at the end of this leaflet.

The rules should be given to you and explained during induction.

### Curfew

You will have a curfew during which you must stay within the Approved Premises.

Minimum curfews are from 11pm to 6am or 7am, depending on the Premises. You may have extra curfew conditions set by the court or as part of your licence.

In rare cases, this curfew could be changed – for example if you have paid work that falls within these hours. You will need to have written proof of the reasons for it to be considered.

### Taking part in programmes

There are a range of activities which are part of the Approved Premises programme. You will be expected to take part in group and individual activities that are on your sentence or supervision plan. You will be expected to keep a record of these activities in a weekly diary.

### Drugs and alcohol

You will be expected to take a drug or alcohol test if staff ask you to.

### Health and medication

Staff will decide if you can manage your own medication. You may be required to give all your medication to staff so they can manage it for you. There are some drugs which no residents are allowed to hold. For example, methadone, Subutex, codeine or diazepam will be looked after by staff if you are prescribed them.

If you are allowed to manage your own medication, staff will regularly check with you that you are doing it properly.

You will also be expected to see a doctor, nurse or other health worker if staff think you need to.

### Smoking

Some APs have designated bedrooms which you can smoke in. If you cannot smoke in your room, there may be a smoking area outside, on the grounds of the hostel.

## Visitors

You will be told whether or not you can have visitors at the Approved Premises.

If you are allowed visitors, they must be over 18 and you must have permission from staff first. Visitors will only be allowed in certain parts of the Premises and must leave when your curfew begins, or earlier if staff ask.

## Searching rooms and property

You must let staff search your room and personal property. This will include your car or other vehicle if it is parked on the grounds of the Approved Premises.

If possible, you should be told this is happening and allowed to watch. Police may also take part in room searches.

You can have as much stuff as fits in a normal large suitcase or small bedroom. If you want to bring big items such as furniture you will have to get permission first.

Members of staff should not read legal documents during a search.

## Electrical items

You will need to get permission from AP staff to bring in any electrical, electronic or photographic item. This includes televisions, DVD players, computers, phones, games consoles and cameras.

You will normally be required to sign an agreement to allow staff to search any IT devices you have, such as a laptop computer. If IT or digital storage devices are found during a property search which have not been previously allowed they can also be searched.

## General behaviour

You must not:

- Damage or try to damage anything that belongs to the AP or other people working, living or visiting the AP.
- Bring any weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs into the Approved Premises.
- Behave in violent, threatening, disruptive, racist or sexist way.
- Bring in, display or share any material which may be considered offensive or anti-social – for example, pornography or racist literature.
- Attract harmful attention to the Premises.
- Cause nuisance to neighbours.
- Endanger the health and safety of others.

## **Other frequently asked questions about Approved Premises**

### **Can I stay overnight somewhere else whilst I am living at Approved Premises?**

If you want to stay overnight away from the Approved Premises you can apply for 'leave of absence'. The maximum leave is four nights, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Examples when you might be granted a leave of absence include:

- Resettlement reasons such as re-establishing links with your home area.
- Compassionate reasons such as visits to dying relatives or to attend a funeral.
- To attend to urgent parental responsibilities.
- Sole caring responsibilities for an elderly or disabled relative.
- Medical reasons requiring a hospital admission.
- Court appearances.

Your offender manager makes the final decision as to whether to grant leave of absence.

### **What happens if I break the rules?**

If you break the rules staff will inform your offender manager. You could lose your place at the AP. You could also be recalled to prison.

### **Moving on/how long will I stay?**

Your stay in the Approved Premises will be temporary. The length of your stay will be agreed with your offender manager. This is usually between 3 and 12 months.

Your key worker and other staff will support you to find move on accommodation for the end of your stay.

## Can I make a complaint?

### Complaints about Approved Premises

You can make formal complaints to the body responsible for the management of the AP where you are accommodated. You can ask staff for information on how to do this.

The complaint procedure must be openly displayed in a communal area of the AP to which all residents have access, and complaint forms must be readily obtainable from staff.

### Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO)

You can write to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman if you have already tried to resolve your complaint with the Approved Premises but are still not happy.

The Ombudsman will only be able to investigate your complaint if:

- you have completed the internal complaints process.
- it is less than three months since you had a response to the final stage of your complaint.
- there is a substantial issue raised.
- you are the person directly affected by the complaint you have raised.

Tell the Ombudsman as much as you can when you write to them. They will not normally come and speak to you themselves so you need to tell them as much as you can in your letter.

Write to the Ombudsman at:

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman  
Third Floor  
10 South Colonnade  
London E14 4PU

Or phone on:

020 7633 4100  
or 0845 010 7938

## Further information

The following may be of interest to you. If you are unable to access these resources elsewhere feel free to contact our Advice and Information Service and we will be happy to send you a copy.

Useful policy documents (these should be available in the library):

*Licence Conditions Policy Framework*

Community Accommodation Service Tier 1 (CAS1) - Approved Premises Policy Framework

PI 51/2014 *Probation Standard Complaints Procedure*

Information sheets

Prisoners' Advice Service information sheet '*Probation Complaints*'

Prisoners' Advice Service information sheet '*Release, Licence and Conditions*'

### Contact our Advice and Information Service

We are a small service which provides information and advice for people in prison. We are independent of the prison service.

Our freephone information line is **0808 802 0060**.

This number is **free** and you do not need to put it on your PIN.

This number is open:

Monday	3pm – 5pm
Wednesday	10:30am – 12:30pm
Thursday	10:30am – 12:30pm

When we are not taking calls you can still leave a short voicemail. Please give your name, prison number, the prison you are in and what information you are looking for. Voicemails will be checked during working hours Monday to Friday and we will respond as soon as possible by post or email a prisoner.

You can write to us at:

**Prison Reform Trust**  
**FREEPOST ND 6125**  
**London**  
**EC1B 1PN**

You do not need to use a stamp.

## **APPROVED PREMISES RULES**

### **Introduction**

I understand that I can live in the Approved Premises for a short time only. I will not be able to live there permanently, and I will live there as a resident – but not as a tenant.

I agree to share any relevant information with the Approved Premises staff, the Benefits Agency and the GP Practice.

I agree to being photographed so that I can be identified when I arrive at the Approved Premises and as and when necessary, after that.

I understand that staff will tell the police about any offence committed by, or suspected of being committed by, people living in the Premises, regardless of whether the offence was committed in the building, in the grounds or somewhere else.

### **Rules**

1. I must stay in the building during curfew hours, which are 11pm to 6am, and obey any extra curfew and other conditions set by the Court or set out in my Licence.

I must obey any extra curfews and I agree to stay in my own room when Approved Premises Managers ask me to.

1a. During any outbreak of a communicable disease, whilst in the AP, I must comply with current guidelines around self-isolation and testing based on local risk assessment. This may include social distancing and not congregating in communal areas in a group.

2. I must pay the Approved Premises maintenance charges if I am working or entitled to claim benefits.

3. I must take a drug or alcohol test if staff ask me to.

4. I must give all my medicine and drugs to staff (if requested), and take my medicine as prescribed by my doctor.

5. I must see a doctor, nurse or other health worker if staff have good reason to think I need to.

6. I must take part in the Approved Premises Rehabilitative Activity programme, including any group or individual activities that form part of my personal sentence or supervision plan.

7. I must let staff search my room and personal things – including my vehicle if it is parked in the grounds of the Approved Premises.
8. I must pay attention to my personal cleanliness and keep my room clean and tidy for health and safety reasons. I must also agree to reasonable requests from staff, which may include activities related to the running and upkeep of the Approved Premises, such as household jobs. I must obey all Health and Safety measures in the Premises.
9. I must not smoke in the building. I may smoke outside the Approved Premises – in the grounds – but only in the area set aside for smokers, if there is one.
10. I must not bring into the Premises – including the grounds – or carry on me, any weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs or drugs paraphernalia, or solvents or other items that could be dangerous. Some solvents and other dangerous items may be allowed, in special cases, if the Approved Premises Managers agree.
11. I must not damage or try to damage anything that belongs to the Approved Premises, its staff, contractors, visitors or other people living here.
12. At all times, I must behave in a way that is not violent, threatening, disruptive, racist, sexist or in any way offensive or prejudiced. I must not do anything that may disgrace the Approved Premises, its staff or other people living here. I must not attract harmful attention to the Premises or do anything that could reasonably be regarded as a nuisance to the neighbours. I must not endanger the health and safety of staff, other people living here, local neighbours, or members of the public.
13. I must not bring anyone into the Premises at any time. (Exceptionally visitors maybe allowed via special arrangement following discussion with the Approved Premises Manager).
14. I must not bring into the Premises any electrical, electronic or photographic item, unless the Approved Premises Managers allow it. I must make sure that any electrical item I have has a valid portable appliance test (PAT) certificate where necessary.
15. Electric scooters and electric bicycles must not be stored or used on the Premises.
16. I must not:
  - bring in to, display in, share or produce in any format in the Approved Premises materials that may be considered offensive, prejudiced or anti-social
  - photograph, film or video any member of staff, person living here, visitor, or any person near the Premises.
  - use any equipment to record conversations or meetings that take place in the Premises, without the permission of the people concerned.