

Education and Work in prison

During your first few days in prison you may be asked to complete numeracy and literacy assessment. This is so they can decide what education courses and work will be most suitable for you.

You may also be asked to do this when you transfer between prisons and before you are released.

Education and training

There is an education department in every prison.

You can take part in educational courses and training to gain skills and qualifications. This could help you find work when they are released.

Courses include academic and vocational courses.

Academic courses are things like:

- Numeracy (which means maths)
- Literacy (which means reading and writing)
- English lessons
- Art
- Business Studies

Vocational courses are things like

- Plumbing
- Hairdressing
- Bricklaying
- Cycle maintenance

If you would like to take part in a course or find out what is available in the prison put in an application to education. Ask a member of staff if you need help doing this.

Advanced Learner Loans

If you would like to study A levels or a vocational course at levels 3 to 6 you might be eligible for an 'Advanced Learner Loans'.

You must meet eligibility criteria for these loans, including that you must be aged 19 or over, and be undertaking an eligible course at an approved college or training organisation in England.

Getting a loan does not depend on your income or any credit checks. Repayments are based on your income and will not begin until your income is over £404 a week, £1,750 a month or £21,000 a year.

Your National Careers Service adviser or learning and skills provider will be able to provide more information on this.

Higher Education and Open University

If you would like to study higher education at a University or college you may be eligible for a 'Part-time Tuition Fee Loan' from Student Finance England.

This can be used for a variety of qualifications including a certificate of higher education, a degree, or a postgraduate certificate. Again, repayments are based on what you earn, not what you owe and you will not start to make repayments until you earn over £21,000 a year.

Many people studying higher education from custody do so through the Open University – they publish their prospectus annually which should be available from your learning and skills provider at the prison. Open University also offer 'access' courses which enable you to practice study skills and build your confidence before undertaking a longer course such as a degree. Learners in prison can apply for a grant from Prisoners' Education Trust to pay for the access course.

Some charitable trusts offer funding for education courses including Prisoners Education Trust (PET), and the Frank Longford Trust. If you need more information we recommend speaking to your learning and skills provider or the National Careers Service adviser in your prison.

You could also contact the Open University on 0300 303 6789 or write to them at:

Offender Learning and Secure Units team
Student Registration and Enquiry Services
The Open University
PO Box 197
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BJ

Work

If you are convicted Prison Rules say that you should work whilst you are in prison. You will be paid for your work in prison. You can spend this money on things through your canteen such as food and phone calls.

If you are unconvicted, you do not have to work but you can choose to.

You will have an assessment to see what type of work will be suitable for you.

If you are willing to work but there is no suitable work available, you should still get paid half of what you would normally get if you were working.

Refusing to work is a disciplinary offence so may lead to an adjudication. It may also impact your IEP level.

What kind of work will I do?

Work in prison is usually through industrial workshops and through farming and gardening units. You might be making goods that are needed in prisons and for sale in the community.

You may also work in a role which helps the prison run properly – such as cleaning on the wing or working on the servery.

What if my health makes working difficult?

If you have a health problem or a disability which make work difficult, speak to someone from healthcare. There may be types of work that are suitable or reasonable adjustments that can be made.

You may be excused from work on a short term or long-term basis. You will still get paid a small amount during this time – see below for information on pay.

Can I fit work around my religion?

You will not be expected to do any work at times of religious observance of the faith you are registered as. You should also not be expected to work with items that are against your faith.

How much will I be paid?

The minimum weekly rates of pay are set out in PSO 4460 *Prisoners' Pay*, as follows:

Unemployment pay

Minimum £2.50 per week (50p a day) based on a five-day week.

Employed rate

Minimum employed rate of pay is £4.00 per week.

Short-term sickness

The rate of pay for short-term sickness is £2.50 per week.

Long-term sickness and retirement

The rate of pay for prisoners who are long-term sick or of retirement age is £3.25 per week.

Maternity leave or caring full-time for children

The rate of pay for prisoners who are on maternity leave, or caring full-time for children is £3.25 per week.

Outside hospital allowance

The allowance for prisoners staying in hospital is £4.35 per week or 60p per day. Governors have discretion to increase this allowance if it is justified.

These rates are only minimum and different prisons pay more for some work. You may also be paid more based on your IEP level.

Further information

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

Useful PSIs and PSOs (these should be available in the library):

PSI 01/2012 *Manage Prisoner Finance*

PSI 06/2012 *Employment, Training & Skills*

PSO 4460 *Prisoners' Pay*

Prison Education & Library Services for adult prisons in England Policy Framework

Other

The Prison Rules (1999)

Contact our Advice and Information Service

We are a small service and we are independent of the prison service.

We can give you information on prison rules, life in prison and how to get help in prison.

Our freephone information line is **0808 802 0060**. This number is for **prisoners** only. This number is **free** and you do not need to put it on your PIN.

This number is open:

- Monday and Thursday afternoon from 3.30pm to 5.30pm.
- Wednesday morning from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

At other times, you can call on **0207 251 5070**. This number is open from Monday to Friday 10.00am - 5.30pm. This number is **not free** but you do not need to put it on your PIN.

You can also write to us at:

Prison Reform Trust
FREEPOST ND 6125
London
EC1B 1PN

You do not need to use a stamp.