

People who can help you in prison

You can talk to prison staff about any problems you have while you are in prison.

But there are other people who can help you too. Prison staff should tell you who else can help you. There should also be information about this on your prison wing.

Here is a list of other people who can help you in prison. There are more people on the next page.

Your keyworker

Your key worker is a member of prison staff whose responsibility it is to support you throughout the custodial period. They should meet with you an average of 45 minutes per week.

Prison Offender Manager (POM)

You can speak to your Prison Offender Manager about your sentence, including objectives on your sentence plan. You can put in an application on your wing to speak to them. If you do not know who your POM is, address the application to the Offender Management Unit (OMU).

Prison Officers

You can ask prison officers on your wing or unit for any help or information you need. If they are unable to help they should be able to tell you who you need to ask and how to do that.

Healthcare

If you have a problem with your health ask to see a member of healthcare. You can request to see someone through a general application or you could ask an officer to help you request an appointment. Healthcare matters are confidential.

Equalities officer

There will often be a prison officer to help with equality issues. You can speak to them if you are having problems related to things like disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or other protected characteristics.

Education staff

Staff from the education department can tell you what courses are available for you. Put in an application if you would like to speak to someone from education or start a course.

Activities staff

If you would like to get involved with work in prison, put in an application to speak to someone from the Activities team. The prison may also have activities forms for you to complete to say what you would be interested in.

Chaplaincy

The chaplaincy team is a team of people from different faiths who are there to help you practice your faith.

Substance misuse support

If you need support with drugs or alcohol, ask to see someone from the substance misuse services there.

Resettlement services

There should be resettlement services available at the prison to help with housing, finding employment, debt advice or setting up benefits. You can ask staff to put in an application if you need to see someone from these services.

Job Centre Plus advisers should be available in the prison to give benefits advice and help you set up benefits claims for your release.

There is more information about this in our information sheet *Getting help with resettlement in prison*.

Other prisoners

Many prisons have serving prisoners in supportive roles who can be a great source of information and support. These may include:

- Induction reps
- Equality reps
- Prisoner Information Desk
- Healing Trauma mentors
- Some prisons have prisoners called buddies. They are there to listen to you if you need someone to talk to. Buddies may tell prison staff things you have said if they need to.

If you feel upset or worried or would like to talk to someone, you can speak to:

Safer Custody team

If you feel unsafe, for example if someone is hurting you or being violent to you, speak to any member of prison staff straight away.

You can ask to speak to a member of the Safer Custody team. Safer custody staff check to make sure people feel safe in the prison.

The Samaritans

The Samaritans helpline is available 24 hours a day. When you call the Samaritans, a volunteer will listen to you and help you talk through your worries, whatever they may be.

You can call the Samaritans for free, on 0845 450 7797 from prisons in England and Wales, or 08457 90 90 90 from prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Some prisons can give you Samaritans phones which are specially for calling Samaritans.

Listeners

Listeners are prisoners who are trained by the Samaritans to listen to you and offer confidential, emotional support in the same way that Samaritans volunteers do for people outside of prisons.

Listeners will support you in private and details of the conversation aren't shared with prison staff. To speak to a Listener you can ring your cell bell and ask an officer, or look for someone wearing a Listener t-shirt. The Listener scheme operates in almost all prisons across the UK.

Official prison visitors

These are local people who can visit prisoners who may not have many people to visit them or who may just want to speak to someone else outside the prison. Speak to someone called an official prison visit liaison officer to ask for one of these people to visit you.

Prisoner pen friends

Prisoners' Penfriends matches volunteer letter-writers, who are all outside prison, with prisoners, so that they can exchange letters. If you are interested you can write to:

Penfriends,
PO box 33460,
London SW18 5YB

Let them know your name, prison number and what prison you are in.

Help with other things

Other organisations help prisoners as well. For example,

- The Citizen's Advice Bureau gives help with things like money and the law.
- Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous gives help to do with drug or alcohol problems.
- The New Bridge Foundation is an organisation that helps prisoners by coming to visit people in prison and helping them get ready for life after prison. Ask prison staff if you would like a volunteer to come to your prison. Or you can contact the New Bridge Foundation at:

The New Bridge Foundation
27a Medway Street
London
SW1P 2BD
Telephone 0207 976 0779

Ask prison staff what other help you can get at your prison.

Who to speak to about problems in prison

- The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) checks prisons to make sure they are run in a good and fair way. They do not work for the prison. They are people from the local area who are volunteers.
If you have a complaint to do with prison life you can ask to see someone from the Independent Monitoring Board. You will have to fill in a special form to do this. The form and a leaflet about the Independent Monitoring Board should be on your prison wing.
- You can write to someone called the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) if you have already tried to solve your complaint with prison staff and you are still not happy.

The ombudsman does not work for the prison. Their job is to look at complaints from prisoners about their management, supervision, care and treatment

Write to the ombudsman at:
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
PO Box 70769
London
SE1P 4XY

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 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):

Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework

Other

Prison Reform Trust information sheet on '*Making a complaint*'

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**