

## **Faith in prison**

### **Can I practice my faith in prison?**

You will be able to practice your faith in prison.

PSI 05/2016 *Faith and Pastoral care for Prisoners* states that the Prison Service recognises and respects the right of prisoners to register and practice their faith whilst in custody.

### **How do I register my faith?**

When you arrive at prison personal details including your religion (including nil-religion) will be recorded on your personal record and Prison-NOMIS.

If you wish to change your religion you should write to the managing Chaplain to let them know. You will be asked to complete a notification form. You should be informed in writing when this has been completed. You will then be allowed to observe the faith practice of the new religion.

### **Chaplaincy**

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

PSI 05/2016 says that 'Chaplains and Chaplaincy Teams must be appointed to meet the needs and reflect the faith make up of the prison population'. This means the team is different in every prison but usually there will be chaplains who are from these religions and faiths:

- Church of England
- Roman Catholic, Methodist and Free Churches
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Hindu
- Sikh

People from other religions or faiths can also come to the prison if needed.

You should be seen by a member of the chaplaincy team with 24 hours of your reception at the prison. They will check your religious registration and explain more about their team. If this visit is not made by someone of your faith, you should be told who the appropriate Chaplain is and when they will be available.

After this if you ask to see a Chaplain you should be seen within 24 hours. You may apply to see any Chaplain regardless of your religious registration.

## **Items and dress that are allowed**

You must be allowed to possess or have access to religious items and texts that are required by your faith.

You should be allowed to wear dress, including headdress that are required by your faith, as set out in the Faith Annexes of PSI 05/2016 *Faith and Pastoral care for Prisoners*.

Incense should be available on the facilities list for prisoners registered as Buddhist, Hindu, Orthodox (Christian), Pagan, Sikh and Chinese religions such as Taoist.

## **Opportunities and place to worship**

The prison must make sure there is a place you can go to practice your faith.

You must have the opportunity to attend the main religious observance of the week for the faith you are registered. This opportunity should be for at least one hour per week.

## **Religious festivals**

Recognised religious festivals should be marked and observed. A list of religious festival dates should be available from the Chaplaincy.

If you are registered as belonging to the faith being observed you must be allowed to attend the celebration unless otherwise excluded. You are not required to work on recognised festival dates of your registered faith and should not lose pay as a result.

## **What if I am in segregation or healthcare unit?**

A member of the Chaplaincy Team must visit prisoners in the Segregation Unit and the Health Care Centre daily.

If you are located in segregation unit or Healthcare Unit you should still be allowed to attend the main religious worship or mediation of your registered faith for one hour per week.

The prison must complete a risk assessment and speak with the appropriate Chaplain to decide if and how this will happen. A Governor should tell you what they have decided before the service you wish to attend.

## **Can I be stopped from attending worship?**

You can be stopped from attending worship or meditation if you are held in a Closed Supervision Centre (CSC) or in 'exceptional individual cases' which have been authorised by the Governor.

PSI 05/2016 states that grounds for exclusion may be:

- Exceptional and specific concerns for the prisoners' mental or physical wellbeing.
- In agreement with the Chaplain leading worship, it is judged that the prisoner has previously seriously misbehaved at a time of worship or meditation.
- The Governor judges that their presence is likely to cause a disturbance or be a threat to security or control.

An exclusion should be for a maximum of one month. It should then be reviewed but can be renewed by the Governor. You should be informed of the decision and reasons after the initial exclusion and again after each review and renewal of this exclusion. There is more information in PSI 05/2016.

## **Work**

PSI 05/2016 states that '*a prisoner must not be required to undertake such work that is unsuitable or offensive to their registered religion*'.

If you believe you are being pressured into work which is not suitable for religious reasons let a member of staff know and if needed use the internal complaints system.

## **Food and faith**

The NOMS Catering Operating Manual, which is Annex B of *PSI 44/2010 Catering – Meals for Prisoners*, states that

*"It is a fundamental requirement that prisoners and members of staff are provided with meals which meet an individual's religious, cultural and medical dietary needs. It is further necessary that all prisoners are provided with food commodities that are stored, prepared and served in an appropriate way. The menu choices and meal provision must reflect the religious and cultural needs of the establishment."*

PSI 05/2016 *Faith and Pastoral Care* contains useful annexes outlining diets and religious festivals of various recognised faiths.

## **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 05/2016 *Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners*

PSI 07/2015 *Early Days in Custody*

*Incentives Policy Framework*

PSI 44/2010 *Catering – Meals for Prisoners*

## 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.