

## Leaving prison

### When will you be released

The prison will tell you when your earliest release day will be. You'll usually be told the day after you've been sentenced. Sometimes it's difficult for them to work out when you will be released, for example, if you were in police custody before you were sentenced. The Prison Service has produced guidance about how sentences are calculated (Prison Service Order 6650). You can get this in the prison library or from the Prison Service website at [www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk).

Some prisoners can apply for **temporary release** before the end of their sentence. For example, you might be allowed out on day release so you can take part in certain training courses that can't be provided inside prison. Or if you're reaching the end of your sentence, you might be allowed out on an overnight licence, so you can spend time at your release address. Get advice about whether you can apply for temporary release.

If you've got a short sentence (less than four years), you might be released on home detention curfew before the end of your sentence (**tagging**). You'll be monitored by a small electronic tag attached to your ankle. Get advice about whether you can apply for tagging. If you're released on home detention curfew, make sure you understand the conditions. If you break the conditions, you'll have to go back to prison.

### Getting ready to leave prison

Whenever you leave prison, there'll be practical things to sort out. You can get help to sort some things out whilst you're still in prison. Get in touch with the resettlement team based in your prison. They might run a course to help you get ready to leave.

### Clothes

When you leave prison, you should get back all the clothes you came in with. If your own clothes don't fit anymore or aren't right for the time of the year, ask the prison to give you suitable clothing before you leave. If you don't get suitable clothing from the prison, you might get a Community Care grant to help you get clothes. To get help to claim a grant, contact your Citizen Advice Bureau.

### Belongings

When you leave prison, you should be given all your things back. You'll have to sign for them so check carefully and don't sign for anything that's missing.

If things have gone missing, you can get help to make a complaint. You might be able to go to court for compensation.

## Money

When you leave prison, you may get:

- a travel warrant. This is to pay for your travel back home or anywhere else in the British Isles or Republic of Ireland where you're going to settle down
- a discharge grant. This is money to help with your living expenses for the first week after you leave prison. You've got to claim a discharge grant at least four weeks before you leave prison. Some prisoners won't get a discharge grant, for example, most prisoners under 18. You won't get a discharge grant if you're waiting to be deported (sent back to your own country).

You should apply for benefits as soon as possible when you leave prison. Get help to make a claim. Get in touch with the Freshstart team in prison who can help set up an interview for you at the Jobcentre Plus office as soon as you leave prison. If you're 16 or 17, you might get cash help from social services as a 'child in need'. Get help to make a claim to social services.

## Looking for somewhere to live

If you've lost your home whilst you were in prison, you'll need to sort out accommodation. In most prisons, there are specialist housing advisers who can help to try and sort out your housing options.

## Getting a job

You might be able to start looking for work before you leave prison. Find out what help is available in your prison to help you to look for work. When you leave prison, you might be able to join a scheme called the Work Programme which can help you get a job. Ask your Jobcentre Plus adviser.

There are rules about declaring your criminal record when you apply for a job. For some jobs, such as working with children, disabled people or other vulnerable people, you'll always have to declare all your criminal convictions, whenever you committed them.

It can be hard getting a job if you've got a criminal record. It's common to be discriminated against if you've been in prison. But it is against the law to treat you unfairly because of things like your race, ethnic origin, age or religion. It's also against the law to treat you unfairly because you're a woman or lesbian or gay or because you're disabled. If you think you are being treated unfairly because of something like this, get advice about what to do.

## Training

You might want to think about getting training when you leave prison. This can put you in a better position to get a job later. Jobcentres can give you information about training opportunities. You might get cash help to go on some courses.

## Sex offender register

If you were convicted of certain sex offences, you have to give the police your name and address when you leave prison. You have to tell them of any changes. How long you'll be on the register for depends on your sentence.

## Further help

### Citizens Advice Bureaux

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve any sort of problem.

Some Citizens Advice Bureaux run advice sessions in prison. If you're in prison, check if they run these sessions in your prison. If they don't run advice sessions, you could write to them explaining your problem. Ask a member of the prison staff for the address of your local CAB.

If you're not in prison, and you want to find your nearest CAB, including those that give advice by e-mail, click on [nearest CAB](#), or look under C in your phone book.

### Nacro

Nacro is a specialist organisation that helps prisoners who are being released. You can phone them on: 0800 0181 259. Their website is [www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk). They write leaflets which could help you when you leave prison. You can download their leaflets from their website.

### Hardman Trust

The Hardman Trust run a funding award scheme for individual prisoners in England and Wales. You can find out more and download an application form from their website. They also produce the Prison Funder Directory. This gives information for prisoners and ex-offenders looking for funding for personal development, like doing courses, or resettlement. You can find the directory online at [www.hardmantrust.org.uk](http://www.hardmantrust.org.uk). Or you can phone them on: 01983 539 373.

## Other information on Adviceguide which might help

- Prisoners - getting further help
- Prisoners – problems with property
- Prisoners and benefits
- Government employment schemes
- Prisoners and housing
- Adult education: organisations which give information and advice

This fact sheet is produced by [Citizens Advice](#), an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law. The information applies to England and Wales only.

This fact sheet was last updated on 20 December 2011, and is reviewed regularly. If it is some time since you obtained this fact sheet, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to check if it is still correct. Or visit our website - [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) - where you can download an up-to-date copy.