



icpo

cross  care migrant project

*innovation and action for social justice*



# **Irish Prisoners Overseas**

## **A Step-By-Step Guide to Preparing for Release**

This leaflet is a step-by-step guide to what you can expect and what you should do when you are released from prison overseas. We hope this guide will help prepare you for what may occur immediately following your release.

## **1) Pre Release Preparation**

If possible you should begin preparing well in advance of your release date.

### **Proof of Detention:**

You should gather and keep any documentation you have in relation to your detention. This documentation will be helpful if you return to Ireland and wish to access social welfare.

### **Travel Documents:**

If you are planning to return to Ireland and do not have a passport you will need to apply for one through the local Irish Embassy. The ICPO can assist you with this and in gathering other documentation that you may need, such as your birth certificate.

If you will be travelling on an emergency passport or temporary travel document, you should make a photocopy or ask the Embassy to provide you with a photocopy. The original may be taken from you when you enter Ireland and a photocopy will help to verify your identification.

### **Preparation for Applying for Social Welfare in Ireland:**

Along with gathering documentation that can prove your detention, anything you can do to gather documentation that can prove your time abroad and in Ireland is advised.

### **Contact Us:**

Please contact the ICPO if you would like advice about employment, or if you wish to discuss your options for post-release accommodation. There are a number of residential programmes in Ireland that are available to help people who have recently been released from prison. The ICPO may be able to refer you to one of these programmes if it is suitable to your needs. Please note that referrals to these programmes must be made well in advance of your return to Ireland.

Please contact Crosscare Migrant Project if you would like advice about social welfare, healthcare or emergency accommodation.

## **2) Release and Return to Ireland**

If you are planning to return to Ireland and would like help accessing post-release supports please contact the ICPO. We will liaise with you and with the Department of Foreign Affairs to find out when you will be released.

### **Deportation:**

In some countries foreign national prisoners are deported by the authorities upon the completion of their sentence. Whether or not you will be deported will depend on the country in which you are detained. Some countries will automatically deport an overseas prisoner if they have served a certain amount of time in prison or if they have any previous criminal convictions. Please contact the ICPO for more information about this.

It is very important that you hold on to whatever documentation you are given in respect of your imprisonment and subsequent deportation. This material will be helpful in obtaining benefits when you return to Ireland.

In some countries prisoners will be required to pay for their flight back to Ireland. If this is the case you will need to prepare for this ahead of time and, if possible, begin saving. You may need to liaise with your family or other supports in relation to this. Unfortunately, the ICPO is unable to pay for these flights.

### **Transfer to Ireland while on Licence:**

If you have been released on licence in the UK it may be possible to apply to have your licence transferred to Ireland. This is decided on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the ICPO for further information about this. It is important to note that there may be serious consequences for leaving the UK without permission while on licence.

## **3) Arriving in Ireland**

An ICPO caseworker will meet you when you arrive in Dublin Airport if you wish. This will provide an opportunity for you to sit down with the caseworker and to discuss what will happen over the next few days. If necessary the ICPO can arrange accommodation for a few nights after you return to Ireland and the caseworker can take you there from the airport.

The ICPO may be able to provide you with a small post-release grant to help you to buy some basic necessities after you arrive in Ireland.

#### 4) Finding Accommodation and Accessing Benefits

The ICPO can make an appointment for you to meet an Information Officer from Crosscare Migrant Project, which is based in Dublin city centre. Crosscare Migrant Project provides advice and support to returned Irish emigrants in areas such as access to social welfare, accommodation and healthcare.

##### Social Welfare:

For returning emigrants the main qualifying criteria to be aware of is the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC). The HRC is essentially a test to see if you have made Ireland your home. Residency and employment history, family ties and future intentions are key aspects of your situation which are examined by a deciding officer.

##### Accommodation:

If you are arriving back to Ireland with no pre-arranged accommodation or only temporary accommodation we strongly advise that you access the supports of ICPO and CMP.

##### Healthcare:

If you return to Ireland to live you will be entitled to access the public health care system. Depending on your income you may also be entitled to a Medical Card which would mean you would generally not be charged for any public health services including GP visits and most prescriptions.

#### 5) Post Release Support

The ICPO invites all former clients to visit our office in Maynooth, Co Kildare after they have been back in Ireland for a few weeks/months. This gives former clients the opportunity to meet our staff and to discuss any issues or problems they are facing with an ICPO caseworker.

##### **Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas**

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##### **Crosscare Migrant Project**

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