



ICPO

cross  care

migrant project

A Step-By-Step Guide for returning to Ireland if you are being released from prison overseas/deported

This factsheet is intended as a guide for prisoners and deportees planning to return to Ireland following a prison sentence or period in immigration detention. It provides an overview of key considerations at each stage of the process, from preparing for release, to arriving back in Ireland and resettling here. It has been prepared by Crosscare Migrant Project and Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO). We work together to assist people to access post-release supports. Please contact the ICPO if you are planning to return to Ireland and would like help accessing these supports. ICPO can make an appointment for you to meet an Information and Advocacy Officer from Crosscare Migrant Project.

For more detailed information on preparing for release please request a copy of ICPO's Resettlement Handbook.

Crosscare Migrant Project provides advice and support to returned Irish emigrants in areas such as access to social welfare, housing supports and healthcare. **Contact details:** 1 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1. Ph: 003531-8732844. Open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm migrantproject@crosscare.ie

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) provides information and support to Irish prisoners overseas and their families. **Contact details:** Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare. Ph: 003531-5053156 icpo@iecon.ie

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This factsheet is for information purposes only and does not and is not intended to constitute legal advice. While every effort has been made to ensure that the content is accurate and up to date, the authors accept no responsibility for errors and omissions.

Pre Release Preparation

If possible you should begin preparing well in advance of your release date, ideally you should speak to an ICPO caseworker about your plans 6-12 months ahead of your release.

Practical things you can do:

- Contact the Irish Embassy/Consulate regarding your release date so that they can assist you with emergency travel documentation (if required)
- Request a copy of the ICPO's Resettlement Handbook and fill out their Resettlement Assessment form
- Make sure that you have clothes to wear on release. You may be able to order clothing from the prison catalogue
- Make contact with family members so they are aware of your release and ask if they can accommodate you on your return even for a short period.

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 will be taken from you when you enter Ireland and a photocopy will help to verify your identification. It is also possible to have a copy emailed to you.

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 need to access social welfare.

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. If you are deported, make sure to keep all documentation about your deportation. This can help you prove that you cannot return to the country from which you were deported.

Preparation for specific post-release accommodation in Ireland:

There are a small number of housing schemes available for former prisoners. 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 and that these services are in high demand.

Release and Return to Ireland

Deportation:

In some countries foreign national prisoners are deported by the authorities upon the completion of their sentence. It will depend on the country in which you are detained whether or not you will be deported; Irish prisoners in non-EU countries including the US and Australia will generally be deported unless they are also citizens of those countries. Some countries will deport an overseas prisoner if they have served a certain amount of time in prison or if they have any previous criminal convictions. You may be deported even if you have lived in that country for some time as a permanent resident or have family members in that country.

If you are being deported you will be transferred to the immigration authorities in the country from which you are being deported. In some countries, such as the United States and Australia, you may be detained for several weeks by the immigration authorities before your deportation. ICPO can assist you during this time if you wish.

As mentioned above, it is very important that you hold on to all documentation you are given about your imprisonment and deportation. This material will be helpful in applying for 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 you can, start saving. You may need to ask for help from your family. 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 return to Ireland while on licence and to have your post-release supervision transferred. This is decided on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the ICPO for further information about this. You should not come to Ireland even for a brief visit until you have permission from your Probation Officer. If you do travel without permission, you risk being recalled to prison for breaching the terms of your licence. It will not be possible for the ICPO to assist you if we are aware that you are in Ireland in breach of your licence.

Arriving in Ireland:

An ICPO caseworker can 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 your plans for the coming days and weeks. If necessary the ICPO can arrange accommodation for a night or two after you return to Ireland and the caseworker may be able to take you there from the airport. You may also be entitled to a small post-release grant from the ICPO to help you to buy some basic necessities after you arrive in Ireland.

Resettling in Ireland

Social Welfare:

You can apply for a social welfare payment on your return to Ireland. You will need your PPS number. If you do not know your PPS number, contact Client Identity Services on +353 71 967 2616. To apply go to your local social welfare office.

In general, if you are under age 66 and have not worked in Ireland for the last 2 years, you need to satisfy a means test and payment specific criteria in order to qualify for a social welfare payment. You will also need to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) and prove your connection to Ireland. This is not based on your nationality. You must show that Ireland is your home. Residency and employment history, family ties and future intentions are key aspects of your situation which are considered by a deciding officer.

Emergency Accommodation:

Ireland is currently experiencing a housing crisis with high rents in the private rental market and high levels of homelessness. If at all possible try to arrange accommodation with family or friends, even temporarily.

If you will be homeless on return, you will need to apply for emergency accommodation and social housing with the Local Authority (ie. the council) in the area you last lived. For Dublin, contact the Central Placement Service on 1800 707 707 or go to Parkgate Hall, 6-9 Conyngham Road, Dublin 8. Outside of Dublin, contact the relevant local authority. If you need help with this, contact Crosscare Migrant Project.

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. Contact your local health centre or Crosscare if you need help with this.

It is important for you to organise medication and prescriptions prior to your release and to gather your medical records.

Follow up Support:

The ICPO will maintain contact with you after your release by phone and/or in person if you would like them to. All former clients are welcome to visit our office in Maynooth, Co Kildare after they have been back in Ireland for a few weeks/months but please phone in advance to arrange this. This gives former clients the opportunity to meet our staff and to discuss any issues or problems they are facing with an ICPO caseworker.