

# Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas

## Advice for families with a loved one in prison overseas during the Covid-19 Pandemic

These are difficult times for all of us and we are all being affected in different ways. However, we understand that it can be particularly challenging for those of you who have a loved one in prison overseas.

We hope you know we are here to help and support you through this difficult time. Feel free to call us on +353 (0)1-505-3156, the London office on +44 207- 482-5528 or email our family support worker on [leslie.alcock@iecon.ie](mailto:leslie.alcock@iecon.ie) or your loved ones caseworker if they have a caseworker already.



### Here are a few suggestions as to what you can do to help support your loved one in prison while continuing to look after yourselves during this tough time.

Where possible, maintain regular contact with your loved one. This is as important for you as it is for your loved one especially if there is increased lockdown in the prison. Being in regular contacts gives both of you reassurance that you are both doing ok. For instance; write to them regularly and if the prison allows it, send photos, books, puzzles and in cell exercises. We can send you or your loved one some of these if need be. Please note that there are post restrictions so some countries due to flight suspensions as a result of Covid-19. Check out the An Post website for updates on post restrictions ; <https://www.anpost.com/Covid-19/Mails-Parcels-services>. If your loved one is in a prison where there is a post restriction and you have good friends or other family members who live in that country you could email them a note for your loved one that they can post on your behalf. Otherwise contact the ICPO and we can try to help get a note to your loved one.

If you can, send your loved one funds so they can call you more often. If you have difficulty with this, please call us and we can help. Depending on what country your loved one is in, you could also consider renting a Skype number that is local to the country your loved one is in, which can reduce the cost of an international call. You can find out more information about how to set up a Skype number here; <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA256/how-do-i-get-a-skype-number>.

If you are having difficulties with sending funds to your loved one, feel free to contact us or contact the Department of Foreign Affairs headquarters directly; [consularassistance@dfa.ie](mailto:consularassistance@dfa.ie) and advise them who you wish to provide funds to. They will link you with a case officer who will then provide you with the account details so you can make an electronic lodgement and they will then contact the appropriate mission (Consulate/Embassy) and arrange the funds to be sent to your loved one.

You could also try to email your loved one. These facilities are usually low cost for you and your loved one. For instance; if you have a loved one in the UK or Australia, you can email them using the [www.emailprisoner.com](http://www.emailprisoner.com) (UK) or <https://www.emailprisoner.com.au/> (Australia). If you have a loved one in the U.S. you could try to email them using <https://www.jpays.com/>. Please note that not all prisons have jpay and in some prisons the prisoners have to buy a tablet to access jpay and in other prisons access to it may be limited for various reasons. Call us and we can discuss other options if these resources are not available in the prison where your loved one is in.

For anyone who has a loved one in a prison in Australia, a number of the prisons have introduced video calls. They are called AVL visits and you can book an AVL visit by calling the visit booking line for the prison. Feel free to call us if you have difficulty with setting this up.

If you have a serious concern in relation to your loved one, consider calling the prison and asking to speak to a welfare officer/social worker or safer custody. Alternatively, if your loved one is struggling encourage them to talk to the chaplain in the prison if they are still on duty. Some prisons in an effort to reduce exposure to the virus have reduced the staff numbers where appropriate. If you have difficulty contacting a staff member in the prison, you can also call us or contact the Department of Foreign Affairs.



It is also really important that you keep yourself safe and abide by the restrictions that the Government have introduced as your loved one in prison is also very worried about you and your health in this difficult time. They will feel better knowing you are safe.

We want to reassure you that we are here to help in any way we can. We are here to provide advice, support and information to you and your loved ones. Please don't hesitate to call the Maynooth office on +353 (0)1-505-3156, the London office on +44 207- 482-5528 or email our family support worker on [leslie.alcock@iecon.ie](mailto:leslie.alcock@iecon.ie) or your loved ones caseworker if they have a caseworker already.

