

Information book for prisoners with a disability



This book will give you information about prison life and where you can get help to do things

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- Mencap, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, Cloisters, Race Equality Action Group and all the disability liaison officers and other prison staff who commented on the draft
- staff and prisoners at HMP Birmingham, HMP Downview, HMP Feltham and HMP Leyhill for their help with focus groups
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What is in this book?

Page

How to get the help you need in prison _____	4
Who to ask for help _____	5
What to do if	
you feel upset or worried. Or someone is treating you badly ____	6
you find it hard to understand information _____	7
you find it hard to do things in prison _____	7
you are not happy with something in prison _____	8
you feel ill or need to take medicine _____	9
Other things you may need help with _____	9
Life after prison _____	12

Where to get this book from

- If you do not have your own copy of this book, ask your personal officer or the disability liaison officer for one.
- You can also ask for some information on CD.
- There is a longer version of this book. If you need more information, ask prison staff for a copy of the longer book.

What is this book about?

- Lots of people in prison have a disability like autism, asthma or depression.
- This book is for prisoners who have a disability.
- It tells you important information about prison life and what help you can get.
- There is another book called Information Book for Prisoners with a Disability you can ask to look at. It tells you more about the things in this book.



How to get the help you need in prison

- It is a good idea to tell prison staff as soon as possible if you have a disability or need help to do things.
- Prison staff **must** do all they can to give you the help you need. The law says they must do this.
- Prison staff will keep what you say private.

What help must prison staff give you?

Prison staff should give you all the help you need to be part of prison life.

Prison staff should give you the help you need to

- understand information or what people are telling you
- do work or education (education is where you learn new things)



- keep in touch with your family and friends
- keep healthy.

Who to ask for help in prison

The main people you can ask for help in prison are



1 **Prison officers or your personal officer**

Talk to prison officers about anything you have questions about or need help with.



2 **The disability liaison officer (they are sometimes called the DLO for short)**

- This person works in prison. They are there to help prisoners who have a disability.
- You can ask to see them at any time. Ask staff to help you do this if you need to.
- You can talk to the disability liaison officer about any help you need to do with your disability or things you find hard to do.



3 **Doctors or nurses** (people from healthcare)

- You can talk to them about any health problems you have. Or if you feel worried or upset.

- ✓ Ask prison staff to help you at any time you need it.
- ✓ Tell prison staff if you are finding it hard to do things. They should give you the help you need.



What to do if

- 1 **You feel upset or worried about things. Or if someone is treating you badly**

It is **very important** you tell someone about this.

You can talk to

- any prison staff
- a doctor or nurse
- a listener or a buddy. These are other prisoners who are there to help you if you are upset or worried. They sometimes wear a special t-shirt.
- the disability liaison officer
- a chaplain (this is a person to do with religion. But you do not have to be religious to speak to the chaplain)
- people outside the prison called Samaritans. They are there at any time to help people who are upset or worried. You can call them on **08457 90 90 90**.



What to do if

2 You find it hard to understand information or what people tell you



Prison staff should

- help you understand information
- give you information in an easy way for you.

You can ask any prison staff to

- tell you things in an easier way
- give you information in another way, like in easy words with pictures or on CD
- read out things for you. Or help you understand things like forms or letters
- staff in the library should also be able to help you get information that is easy for you to understand.

3 You find it hard to do things in prison because you have a health problem or a disability



You can speak to

- a prison officer
- the disability liaison officer
- in some prisons, there are other prisoners who are there to help prisoners with a disability.

They sometimes wear a special t-shirt.

Prison staff must do what they can to make things easier for you.

What to do if

4 You are not happy with something or you think the prison has done something wrong



- Ask prison staff what to do if you are not happy with something in prison. Or another prisoner may be able to help you.
- You may have to fill in a form to say what you are not happy about. You can ask for help to do this.
- If you want to say something very private you can fill in a special form called a **confidential access** form.
- There are people outside the prison called the **Independent Monitoring Board**. You can ask to speak to them if you have a problem in prison.
- If they cannot solve the problem, you can write to someone called the **Prisons and Probation Ombudsman** at this address

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
Ashley House
2 Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ

If you are not happy with the healthcare you get

- Speak to someone in healthcare first to see if you can solve the problem.
- If healthcare staff cannot solve the problem, you can get help from a group outside prison called **ICAS**.
- You can get the phone number for ICAS from prison staff, the library or by phoning people called NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.



What to do if

5 You feel ill or need to take medicine



If you are ill or have a problem with your eyes or teeth

- Ask to see a doctor, nurse, dentist or optician.
- If you cannot get the help you need in your prison, staff will decide what the best thing is to do.
- **If you need to take medicine**
 - o tell prison staff you have to take medicine
 - o a doctor in prison will give you the medicine you need
 - o you may be able to keep the medicine in your cell. Prison staff will let you know.



Other things you may need help with

You can find more information about these things in the longer book.

(these things are in **letter order**- starting with the letter A)

Adjudications

(If you break prison rules you may have to go to an adjudication. This is where you go to talk about what happened.)

- The governor or prison staff must help you understand what is happening.
- You might be allowed to have someone with you if you don't understand.



- Tell the governor if you broke a rule because you did not understand it.
- Your solicitor can help.

Cell

Your cell or the person you share a cell with

- Talk to prison staff if you have a problem with your cell or the person you share a cell with.



Food

- Tell a doctor or nurse if you cannot eat certain food.
- The prison will make you special food if a doctor or nurse says it is ok.
- Ask prison staff if you need help to choose food.

Forms

- Prison staff should give you the help you need to fill in forms.
- Other prisoners may be able to help too.

Money and benefits

- Tell prison staff if you need help with money or benefits. They will tell you who can help you.
- You must tell the place you get benefits from that you are now in prison.



Rules

- Prison staff should give you information about the rules. Ask them to explain any rules you do not understand.



Searches

(when staff do a search of your body)

- Tell prison staff if you find it difficult to have a search because of your disability or a health problem.
- Prison staff will find the best way to do the search.



Sentence plan

- Your personal officer or offender manager should give you all the help you need.

Visits from your friends or family

- Prison staff should give you all the help you need to get visits or keep in touch with people.



Work or education

- Tell prison staff or the disability liaison officer if you find work or education hard.
- They should try their best to help you do work or education (education is where you learn new things).



Life after prison

- Prison staff can help you get ready for life after prison.

Things to sort out before you leave prison

Benefits

- You can apply for benefits from Jobcentre Plus.
- Ask staff from the resettlement team for help.



Doctor

- Ask staff from the healthcare team to help you get a doctor outside prison.



General help with life after prison

- You might need to get in touch with the social services people in the area you will be living in. Your family or friends can do this for you.
- You can ask the resettlement team or the healthcare team for help to do this. They can tell you about anyone else who can help you after you leave.



Housing (if you will have nowhere to live)

- Ask the resettlement team for help.
- Or your prison may have special people you can talk to about places to live outside prison.

Licence

(If your sentence is longer than 1 year, you will have to follow some rules when you leave prison. These rules are called a **licence**.)



- Someone called an **offender manager** will make sure you understand and follow the rules. They may be able to help you with other things as well.

Work, training courses or education

- Ask staff from the education team or the resettlement team for help to get work or training after you leave prison.

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- You can write to Prison Reform Trust, FREEPOST ND6125, London EC1B 1PN and ask for a copy.

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