

## Nepacs - supporting a positive future for prisoners and their families

Our mission is to support prisoners and ex-prisoners, their families and friends; to reduce the impact and stigma of imprisonment on the lives of families and contribute to the positive rehabilitation of offenders.

We provide a range of service to support prisoners and their families within prison and in the community, including Visitors' Centres, play areas and visits room tea bars at seven prisons across the north east. Other projects include a youth project, integrated family support, support at north east courts, special children's visits and a holiday scheme. We also give small grants to relieve hardship or aid resettlement; applications through probation.

Our projects rely heavily on volunteers and donations. If you would like to volunteer, make a donation or become a member, please let us know, either through the visitors' centre or through our head office:

**Nepacs, 20 Old Elvet, Durham City, DH1 3HW**

**Tel: 0191 3757278**

**Email: [info@nepacs.co.uk](mailto:info@nepacs.co.uk)**

**Find out more at [www.nepacs.co.uk](http://www.nepacs.co.uk)**



If you would like to receive this information in another language or format please ring 0191 3757278.



## First time in prison?

**Practical information and advice for men and women in custody and their families and friends**



**This guide provides general information about what happens after someone is either remanded or sentenced to custody and when they first arrive at prison.**

# What happens when ....

## A prisoner leaves the court?

Immediately after being remanded or sentenced the prisoner will be taken down into the court cells, where they may be seen by their Solicitor or Barrister and possibly the Duty Probation officer. They can explain the sentence to the prisoner and give advice about the possibility of an appeal.

Family and friends will not be given access to the cells, but they may want to consult with the Solicitor or Barrister to confirm which prison the prisoner is being taken to. If they are sentenced in one of the North East courts, they will most likely be taken to **HMP & YOI Durham (males)**, or **HMP & YOI Low Newton (females)**.



**Before going in to court for sentencing, it is helpful for the defendant to:**

- ◆ **have a small amount of cash on them, which can be placed in their personal account if they are sentenced or remanded in custody**
- ◆ **give valuable personal possessions, such as car keys, mobile phone, house keys, expensive jewellery etc. to family/ friends for safekeeping, as it will be difficult to do so after sentencing.**

Whilst in the court cells, the prisoner will have their personal possessions removed, documented and bagged, ready to be taken with them to the prison. Prisoners may have a long wait in the cells until the escort vehicle is ready to leave the court.

**Women prisoners may be escorted in the same vehicle as male prisoners.**

If a family member has concerns about the health and wellbeing of the prisoner it is important that they let Probation know, so that this information can be conveyed to the escort staff and reception staff at the prison.



**Most people rely on mobile phones to store important numbers. As prisoners will not have access to their mobile phone it is helpful if they write down key contact numbers before going to court and keep the list in their pocket.**

## North East Prisons Contact Details

Prison	Contact Number	Visitors Centre	Booked Visits line
HMP Northumberland (men)	01670 762 300	01670 382 066	All domestic visits are managed and booked by prisoners
HMP & YOI Durham (men)	0191 332 3400	0191 332 3676	0191 332 3417
HMP & YOI Low Newton (women)	0191 376 4000	0191 376 4138	0191 376 4147
HMP Frankland (men)	0191 376 5000	0191 376 5200	0191 376 5048
HMP & YOI Deerbolt (Young men aged 18-24)	01833 633200	01833 633 272	01833 633 349
HMP Holme House	01642 744000	01642 744 080	0300 0606 602
HMP & YOI Kirkclevington	01642 792600	Welcome centre not contactable by telephone	All domestic visits are managed and booked by prisoners

## Get help with the cost of prison visits if you are on low income

Apply online from the  
Assisted Prison Visits Unit at  
[www.gov.uk/helpwithprisonvisits](http://www.gov.uk/helpwithprisonvisits)

Nepacs' visitors' centre staff and volunteers will be pleased to offer you support and advice, and copies of the visit confirmation forms.

The quickest and easiest way to claim your costs is online.

But if you have difficulty applying online ring APVU for advice on 0300 063 2100, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Paper application forms are available from APVU.



## Useful contacts

**Nepacs:** Providing support to families and friends of prisoners in the north east.  
www.nepacs.co.uk Email: info@nepacs.co.uk  
Telephone support service: 07854 594012 or 07774 385276

**Offenders Families Helpline:** Support and information on all aspects of the courts and prison process. Tel: 0808 8082003 www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org

**PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust):** Help counselling and support for prisoners, ex-offenders and their families. Tel: 0808 808 344 (freephone)

**Prison Reform Trust:** Information on prison rules, life in prison and how to get help in prison. Tel: 0808 802 0060 (freephone)

**NACRO (National Association for Care & Resettlement of Offenders):**  
Tel: 0300 123 1999 (helpline) Tel: 0845 600 3194 (resettlement helpline)

**Addaction:** Support for children, young people and adults with alcohol, drugs, mental health and well-being issues. Tel: 020 7251 5860  
www.addaction.org.uk/services

**Gamcare:** Confidential counselling, advice and information for those affected by a gambling problem, (the service supports both gamblers and their families).  
Freephone 0808 802 133 www.gamcare.org.uk

**Citizens Advice:** Free confidential and impartial advice on a range of social, legal, financial and employment issues. Tel: 03444 111 444  
Online advice service - www.citizensadvice.org.uk

**Samaritans:** A confidential helpline, providing a safe space to talk, any time of the day or night. Tel: 116 123 ( free UK Helpline).  
From inside prisons you will need to call 0845 450 7797 from a PIN phone, or you can ask staff for the free-phone Samaritans mobile phone to use in private.

**MIND:** Support and advice for all aspects of mental health and wellbeing, including addiction and dependency. Tel: 0300 123 3397

## A prisoner arrives at prison?

There is a standard reception procedure when prisoners arrive at the prison. It will involve a process of completing paperwork, medical and property checks,

The prisoner is taken to the '**Reception**' area of the prison, where they wait to be called for the following:



Interview with prison staff to record personal details.



A photograph and fingerprints will be taken.



Personal property is logged, and anything not appropriate to be taken into prison will be taken from and stored until the prisoner's release. Any perishable items such as food or toiletries will not normally be allowed and will be disposed of.



Prisoners will be searched and, if necessary, given prison clothes. They may be allowed to keep some of your own clothing.



Any money the prisoner has with them will be taken and added to their prison account, which they can access during their sentence, subject to certain limits



Prisoners will be asked about any concerns they may have, for example; about care of children, pets, vulnerable adults, tenancy etc



Prisoners will then be allocated a cell.



## Health and medical

Prisoners will be seen by a health care professional on arrival to assess their immediate health and social care needs, including any support they might need around drug or alcohol dependency.

If taking prescribed medication, it is helpful if the prisoner either brings a copy of the prescription with them, or brings the medication.

**Medication must be in the original bottles or packets, with the relevant pharmacy label intact.**



## Smoking

A smoking ban has been introduced in most prisons in England and Wales. Prisoners will not be allowed to smoke tobacco, however, e-cigarettes will be available to buy through the prison 'canteen'.

**Men:** HMP Durham operates "No Smoking"

**Women:** HMP & YOI Low Newton operates "No Smoking"



## Searches

**Men:** there is a routine 'full search' which is for security purposes, eg to make sure prisoners do not have any drugs, weapons or phones concealed on their person. There are guidelines for staff carrying out the search, for example, it must be done out of sight of other prisoners, carried out by officers of the same sex and the prisoner will not at any time be fully undressed.

**Women:** are subject to a 'rub down' search which should not be intrusive and the prisoner should not normally be asked to raise or remove outer clothing. Searches should always be respectful. If there is a reason for them to remove items of clothing, staff should not touch the prisoner whilst they do this. At no point should the prisoner be fully undressed during a search, which should be carried out by a female officer.

**Q:** Is there anyone who can give advice on how to explain the situation to children?

**A:** Yes. There are a number of organisations which can provide support and advice for example:

Offenders Families Helpline have helpful information on their website: [www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org/telling-the-children](http://www.offendersfamilieshelpline.org/telling-the-children)

The Nepacs' youth project team can provide direct support to children and young people.

Prisoners or the families can also ask to speak to a Nepacs' family support worker based at a north east prison.

## What questions do I have?

A series of 13 horizontal dotted lines for writing.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: What are the different categories for prisoners?

A: There are 4 categories for men:

Category A - high security

Category B - less than high security but for those for whom escape must be made very difficult

Category C - those considered to be of low risk but not eligible to serve in open conditions

Category D - is for prisoners trusted to serve in open conditions

Women and young offenders are simply classified as suitable for open or closed conditions.

### Q: How can a prisoner improve their category?

A: Prisoners can improve their category by following the rules and taking part in work, education and other programmes within the prison.

### Q: What can I do if I am concerned about someone in custody?

A: It is important to speak with someone if you have concerns. You can speak to:

- ◆ Safer Custody, (contact numbers are on prison websites and Nepacs' website and leaflets)
- ◆ Nepacs' staff at the visitors' centre
- ◆ Call the Nepacs' telephone support line

## What will prisoners be given when they arrive?

Prisoners will be given:

- ◆ An Induction booklet and information
- ◆ A 'Bundle' - bedding, plastic plate and cutlery, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush etc
- ◆ A pack containing materials for hot drinks, a snack, milk and cereal.

### Prison number

Each prisoner is then given a prison number. This number is unique to each person and should be used in conjunction with their full name to avoid any confusion or mistakes.

The prisoner will keep this number if they move from Remand to Sentence or if they move from one prison to another. Family and friends will need to know this number as soon as possible to enable them to book visits, send letters and also to send money into the prisoner.



**Visitors do not require the prison number to book a reception visit, so this can be done soon after sentencing, depending upon the operating hours of the booking line.**

## What visits are prisoners entitled to?

**Convicted prisoners** are allowed a reception visit within the first month and one visit every two weeks.

**Remand prisoners** are allowed a reception visit within the first 7 days and three visits every 7 days.



***A reception visit to HMP & YOI Low Newton, is permitted within the first 7 days of being taken into custody and DOES NOT have to be booked. It's advised that families ring first to check that the prison is open.***

No-one under the age of 18 years is allowed on a reception visit.

All other visits must be booked in advance.

Some prisons also offer additional **special visits**, for example: parent/child visits (available at HMP & YOI Durham and HMP & YOI Low Newton). Prisoners can ask their Wing Officer about these extra visits or look out for posters on the wing,

Anyone on the **approved list** can book a visit. Prisoners will have to submit details (name, address, date of birth and relationship) of their family or friends to the prison for approval. It can take up to a week to get a visitor list approved.

All visits must be booked in advance using the prison **booking line or booking email (<https://www.gov.uk/prison-visits>)** for each individual prison.



***All visits to HMP Durham must be booked – even reception visits. The booking line is very busy, particularly Monday mornings. This can be frustrating but families trying to book are asked to be patient and not to worry if they can't get through straight away.***

## What privileges and rights do prisoners have?

Prisoners who follow the rules can earn privileges, this is called the: 'Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme'. Through this scheme, prisoners may be able to:

- ◆ Get more visits from family or friends
- ◆ Be allowed to spend more money each week.

Privileges are different in each prison - prison staff will explain to how the scheme works.

Prisoners also have rights whilst they are in prison, these include:

- ◆ Protection from bullying and racial harassment
- ◆ Being able to get in touch with a solicitor
- ◆ Healthcare – including support for mental health conditions.

## What a prisoner should do if they are worried or upset

It is important that prisoners talk to someone if they are feeling worried or if something is bothering them, They can tell:

- ◆ Prison staff – prisoners may have someone called a 'personal officer', or they can talk to the officer in charge of their wing.
- ◆ Safer custody staff – who check to make sure people feel safe in prison
- ◆ The doctor or nurse who gives their health check
- ◆ The chaplain
- ◆ A prisoner called a "listener" or "buddy".
- ◆ The Samaritans

# How do prisoners ...



## Buy goods in prison?

The way a prisoner buys items in prison is through a system called 'canteen'. Prisoners are initially allowed to spend up to £15 per week (dependent on the prison). Each week they fill in a form which tells them what they are allowed to spend and a list of items they can buy.

Things for sale on the canteen list include: phone credit, stamps, writing paper, clothing and additional food items.

Prisoners receive a daily allowance which varies from 50p per day to £4 per day depending on if they are employed within the prison.

Any money the prisoner has when they arrive in prison or any money that is sent to them will be put into their '**private cash**' account. Each week an amount will be taken from their 'private cash' and put into the prisoner's '**spends**'. This happens automatically.

Items ordered from **canteen** will arrive on a set day each week.



## Receive money?

Prisoners can have money sent in to be credited to their personal accounts. This can be done in the following ways:

- ◆ **Postal Order** - the sender must remember to write the prisoner's name and prison number on the back of the postal order, as well as their own name and address, before sending it.
- ◆ In public sector prisons money can be sent in for a prisoner via **debit card or bank transfer**. Senders will need the prisoner's number and date of birth. It can take a few days for monies sent in and credited to the account. This service can be accessed at: [www.gov.uk/send-prisoner-money](http://www.gov.uk/send-prisoner-money)

# How can prisoners make telephone calls?



Prisoners will be allowed to make one short phone call, to let family or friends know where they are either the same evening or the following day.

This is also an opportunity to pass on their allocated prison number.

Prisoners are given a **PIN account** for telephone calls. The system works on a credit basis and the selected list of contact numbers must first be approved. This is done on the first or second day of induction after clearance forms are handed in - the prison will phone family and friends to check they are happy to receive calls.

**This process can take up to a week, especially if there are a lot of new prisoners.**



### Did you know?

***If prisoners do not have important contact details, family or friends can send this information to them in a letter or email.***



***Whilst it is more convenient to ring a mobile number it is cheaper if prisoners phone a landline.***

Prisoners will be able to put credit on the phone from their personal account. They will receive a weekly unemployment rate of around 50p per day whilst serving their sentence. This amount can be increased if they take part in education, employment or rehabilitation activities.

In some prisons (including HMP & YOI Durham), there are **PIN phones** in each individual cell, so prisoners may not have to queue to use communal phones on the wings.

The prison authorities can listen in to calls with friends and families but they will not listen in to calls made to solicitors or to the Samaritans.

## What happens during Reception for sentenced prisoners?

During the reception period prisoners will be given a security category, and this will be one of the things used to determine which prison establishment they will be moved on to.

**Female prisoners and young offenders are simply classified as suitable for 'open or closed conditions'.**

It is possible to progress from a high to a lower category, during the course of a sentence, even those who are serving long sentences.

After all the procedures are complete, the prisoner will be placed in the **'holding cell'** to wait until all others have been processed. Prisoners will then be taken to the **Induction Wing**, where they will be given the opportunity to purchase some general food and other items which will complement meals and other services provided eg tea, coffee, breakfast cereal and sugar.

Prisoners must make these items last and should **not** borrow from others.

### Day Two

Prisoners will meet with staff who will tell them about prison life and what they need to do. This is called induction. The induction process usually begins on the morning after reception into prison. Staff will also explain:

- ◆ Rules and regulations
- ◆ Contact with family and friends (visits, phone calls, letters, emails etc)
- ◆ Purchasing items such as clothing, sweets, magazines etc from prison mail order
- ◆ Activities such as gymnasium, libraries, education and employment
- ◆ Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme
- ◆ Religious facilities

**Prison officers are there to help. Prisoners are encouraged to ask any questions they have during the induction process.**

## How can prisoners and families or friends keep in touch?



### Letters

Prisoners can receive letters from family or friends. Letters must include the prisoner number on the envelope next to the prisoner's name.

Prisoners will receive one free 2nd class letter each week, to send to a relative or friend.

Random checks are carried out on letters so sometimes they will have been opened by the time they are received.



### Email

Family and friends can also send emails by signing up to the following:

- ◆ **Email a prisoner** - The email will be printed, processed and passed to the prisoner. This service is available in all seven north east prisons. This can be accessed at: [www.emailaprisoner.com](http://www.emailaprisoner.com)
- ◆ **E-postman** - This enables the prisoner to reply to emails they receive. This service is currently only available in HMP & YO1 Durham. This can be accessed at: <https://e-postman.co.uk>



**Things can change quickly within the prison estate, so for the most up to date information visit our website at: [www.nepacs.co.uk](http://www.nepacs.co.uk) or contact our telephone support service on: 07854 594012 or 07774 385276.**