



When Someone is Convicted of a Serious/Sex Offence

If a friend or a member of your family has been convicted of a violent offence or an offence of a sexual nature, you may have some questions. This information sheet explains what happens when someone is sent to prison for a serious offence. If you would like to find out more, contact the Families Outside Support & Information Helpline, 0500 839383 between Monday and Friday. This is a free confidential service which may be able to help you with any further questions you may have.

What happens next?

Following a conviction for a serious or sexual offence, the prisoner will be risk assessed to determine how much of a risk they are. The prisoner will be involved in the assessment and will be asked about the offence. The risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis and also prior to release. Following sentence, prisoners will usually be transferred from the local prison to Polmont (for Young Offenders), Peterhead, Dumfries or Cornton Vale (females), although some prisoners serving shorter sentences may remain at the local prison (possibly Edinburgh or Barlinnie).

ICM (Integrated Case Management)

Integrated Case Management (ICM) is the process used by the Scottish Prison Service and Criminal Justice Social Work to help prisoners address their offending behaviour. All convicted prisoners receive a Community Integration Plan (CIP) which includes details of how they will be managed during their time in prison and upon their release.

The prisoner's individual plan will be discussed openly with the prisoner and a range of staff (including those from social work and health care) and could include goals about changing behaviours and getting help with substance misuse. A Personal Officer will help the prisoner keep to the plan and will feed into the case conference meetings held every year about the progress of the prisoner.

Prisoners who are subject to post-release supervision (including all sex offenders serving six months or more in prison) are managed via an **enhanced** version of the ICM process, where prison and social work staff (both prison-based and community-based) work together to assess

the risks associated with individual offenders.

All prisoners managed through the enhanced process, take part in a case management meeting called a Case Conference. This meeting takes place within six months of admission to prison, then once a year until release. Prison officers, social workers and other professionals (such as healthcare and addictions staff) work together to develop an action plan to support the prisoner through their sentence. This plan will include details of what work needs to be done to reduce the risks of the prisoner offending again (following release from prison); this may include participation in prisoner programmes and approved activities.

Where a prisoner is considered to be a high risk, prior to release (or transfer to less secure conditions), other key staff involved in criminal justice (such as police and social work) are invited to attend the pre-release Case Conference. This will allow the criminal justice agencies involved to share information about the individual (see MAPPA below).

Can I be involved in the ICM process?

Family members can be involved in the ICM case conferences for their relative, which normally take place once a year. However, this would only be with the permission of the prisoner.

What sort of programmes will the prisoner be able to access?

There is a range of programmes which aim to reduce sexual and violent offending. They will be offered according to the risk and needs of the prisoner. Anyone convicted of a sex offence will be assessed to see if they are suitable for these

programmes. They are voluntary and prisoners can refuse to take part, although refusal to take part may affect their chance of parole. The groups are usually made up of people who have committed different types of offences. Priority for treatment is based on need and time left until release. The programmes are delivered by psychologists, social workers and specially trained prison officers. The programmes (and what is said during them) are confidential and all participants have to agree to this by signing a contract.

Maintaining Innocence

Prisoners may be maintaining their innocence and, as a result, be unwilling to participate in offence-focused courses. This can make it more difficult to make progress in their sentence and refusal to engage may have a negative impact on opportunities not just for progression but also for any decisions on release, such as parole.

Parole

The prisoner may be eligible to apply for parole. Parole is not granted automatically. It is considered on the basis of reports from various people such as prison officers, psychologists, offender managers and others. These reports cover the nature of the offence, home circumstances, release plans, behaviour in prison and progress made in prison. The parole process starts six months before the earliest date of release. The reports will be considered by the Parole Board and the prisoner may have to attend a hearing. If your family member is granted parole, they will be given licence conditions and supervised in the community.

Parole (if maintaining innocence)

The Parole Board has to accept that your family member is guilty. They may still decide to release them if they believe they will not commit crimes on parole. The Parole Board does release people who say they are innocent. The prisoner will have to show that they are not a risk to the public. If the Parole Board refuses release only because the prisoner maintains innocence, the decision can be challenged.

What is MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)?

The risk assessments and pre-release case conferences help with any decisions on how the

offender should be managed on release. This is the point at which all relevant information is gathered and provided to MAPPA co-ordinators across the eight Community Justice Authorities (CJAs). This requires the Police, Scottish Prison Service, Social Work Services and other authorities (such as local authorities, housing authorities and NHS Health Boards) to work together to assess the potential risk each offender may pose and make plans to manage this.

Licence

If a prisoner is released under licence, they are placed under the care of the Social Work Services. In addition, Sex Offender Liaison Officers have recently been introduced and oversee cases where offenders are housed in local authority or housing association accommodation, and there are increased police powers to search sex offenders' homes. This is all part of the sentence and the period varies. The prisoner should be told how long the licence will last.

Further Information

If you suspect someone close to you is showing signs of abusive behaviour, contact **Stop it Now!** on freephone helpline on **0808 1000 900** or visit www.stopitnow.org.uk The Helpline gives all adults, including those at risk of re-offending, totally confidential information, advice and support to prevent sexual offending.

For further information on the rights of your family member regarding the Sex Offender Register go to: www.scotland.gov.uk

If you are a victim and have experienced a sexual crime either as a child or an adult, contact your local police station or Victim Support Scotland (0845 6039213). www.victimsupportscotland.org.uk

If you are worried about the possibility of a child who may be in danger, speak with the police, local Social Work Services, Health Visitor or telephone the National Child Protection Helpline on 0800 022 3222. www.infoscotland.com/childprotection

If a member of your family has been accused of a sexual offence and is facing a prison sentence, contact the **Support & Information Helpline** on freephone 0500 839383. Or you can e-mail the Helpline on: admin@familiesoutside.org.uk www.familiesoutside.org.uk