Information NOW
Information for people in Newcastle upon Tyne

Support for people leaving prison or with criminal records

When you have finished your time in prison you will be supported to prepare for your release. Before leaving there are lots of things to think about:

- Prepare for release day: Read your release papers carefully and arrange transportation from the prison to your new accommodation.
- Review belongings: Plan what to take with you and what you may need for the first few days after leaving.
- Keep appointments: Keep regular contact with your probation officer and attend appointments.
- Tell family and friends: Let them know you're leaving prison and how to contact you.
- Consider social support: Seek support from friends, family, or support groups.

Leaving prison and moving back into the community can come with many challenges, for people who have already left prison having a criminal record can continue to be a challenge. There is local and national support available to help.

Local help and support

You may need some more help and support to live well in Newcastle. There are lots of local service that can help you.

Newcastle Probation Service will create a plan with you to help you to settle back into the community and reduce your risk of re-offending. This will include

- where you'll live
- when you'll report to your probation officer
- agree any limits on what you can do. For example where you can travel to, or if you have to wear an electronic tag
- claim benefits you are entitled to
- They can also signpost to other services for support with drugs **and alcohol**, **domestic abuse** or if you were previously involved in sex work

Ingeus Justice Services can help you with moving back into your community, changing your behaviour and reducing your risk of re-offending. Their services include:

- **Accommodation** services support people to find/sustain accommodation and prevent homelessness.

- **Personal Wellbeing** services covering social inclusion, lifestyle and associates, family & significant others, and emotional well-being; tailored support to enable People on Probation to build stronger, healthier relationships, improve wellbeing, develop their confidence and successfully integrate into communities.
- **Finance, Benefits and Debt** services to help people overcome barriers to financial security, including low incomes, debt, disrupted access to benefits and insufficient income.
- **Dependency and Recovery** services to provide a broad range of substance misuse and addiction related support for a range of complex needs.

Nepacs supports individuals, families, young people and children who have been affected by the criminal justice system, prison or care system.

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN) can help you with advice and signposting on a range of issues, including housing, debt, your civil rights, benefits and employment.

North East Law Centre provide one-off free legal advice and signposting. They can support with family law, welfare benefits, education law, employment law, criminal law and civil law.

National help and support

Nacro has a dedicated Resettlement Plus Helpline which offers information and advice to ex-offenders, serving prisoners, their families and friends and to organisations working with them. 0300 123 1999?
Trailblazers is a national charity that reduces reoffending among young people through providing volunteer mentors. Young people are supported to change their attitude, thinking and behaviour through intensive mentoring, advice, advocacy and targeted specialist support. 07807 267280

Prisoners' Advice Service provide legal advice and information to prisoners in England and Wales regarding their rights, the application of the Prison Rules and conditions of imprisonment.

Prisoners Abroad help people imprisoned overseas and their families. They have a resettlement service that supports people who return to the UK after leaving prison.

Children Heard and Seen are a national charity that help children, young people, and families affected by having a parent in prison

Unlock is a national independent advocacy charity that supports, speaks up and campaigns for people facing stigma, prejudice and discrimination because of their criminal record.

Benefits and money

Everyone leaving prison is given a discharge grant paid by the prison when you leave. This is money to help you with your costs until your benefits are sorted out.

If you were getting Universal Credit for housing before you went into prison, you can continue to get help with housing costs as part of your Universal
Credit payment for up to six months. This applies if you are on bail, on remand or sentenced. You will not get any Universal Credit payments if you expect to be in prison for more than 6 months

When leaving prison you cannot make a Universal credit claim in advance of your release, but you can talk to a prison work coach before release about claiming. They can help you check benefits you may qualify for, help you to get identification (ID), set up a bank account and book an initial appointment at your nearest jobcentre. To claim Universal Credit on release you will need ID and a bank account.

Once you have contacted your local jobcentre a DWP work coach in the jobcentre will help support you back into work, if youre fit for work or give support if youre not fit for work.

They can also help you with:

- making a Universal Credit claim if you cannot make it yourself
- training and volunteering opportunities
- a tailored programme of activities to build confidence
- an advance payment of your first Universal Credit payment if you cannot afford general living expenses.

Read more on InformationNOW about welfare benefits and where to get benefits advice in Newcastle

Managing your money

Having a bank account and learning skills to best manage your money is important to help you resettle in your local community when leaving prison. It helps you access welfare benefits payments, housing and employment.

You can open a bank account before you leave prison, check with prison officers or advisors if your prison has a banking arrangement. Many prisons have signed up to the Prisoner Banking Programme where people with no more than six months and no less than six weeks until their release date can have a basic bank account set up with Barclays, the Co-operative Bank, HSBC, Lloyds Group, Natwest Group, Santander, and Nationwide Building Society. Most bank and employers need a form of identification (ID) from you, if you dont have ID you can get funding from HM Prison and probation services to apply for ID documents if you have less than twelve weeks until release.

The Prisoner ID programme gives funding to apply for

- Birth certificates
- Adoption certificates
- Driving licences
- Marriage/civil partnership certificates
- Divorce decree absolute certificates

Some prisons have other ways to help you open a bank account where an authorised prison staff member signs a letter confirming the prisoner’s identity and application.

Read more on InformationNOW about Managing your money

Food banks and free meals

If you find it difficult to access food after leaving prison because of money, cooking skills or other barriers; food banks and other food help can support you.

Read more on InformationNOW about Food help in Newcastle

Housing advice

Most prisons have a housing advice service available from an organisation (Clinks provide support in the North East). If you won't have anywhere to live at the end of the sentence, then arrange to meet with them to discuss your housing options prior to your release.

The Housing Advice Centre is part of Newcastle City Council and offers a free, confidential advice service to anyone that has housing problem

Local councils, housing associations and private landlords can ask someone applying for housing if they have any unspent convictions. You can be refused housing on the basis of your criminal record.

If you are applying for a mortgage banks and building societies can ask someone applying for housing if they have any unspent convictions. You can be refused a mortgage if you have an unspent conviction..

Read more on InformationNOW about:

- **buying or renting a home in Newcastle**
- **what to do if you're worried about becoming homeless**
- **problems with your neighbours**
- **problems with your landlord**

Volunteering

Volunteering can be a great way to develop your skills and confidence and get to know a new area. By helping others you will learn new things, get to know others and give something back to your community.

There are lots of volunteer roles available and many organisations will support people with a criminal record to volunteer.

Junction 42 help adults with criminal convictions in the North of Tyne area to find volunteering placements

Read more about volunteering on InformationNOW

Support to look for work, training and employment

Before you leave prison you can get help, advice and learn employment skills from Employment Hubs. Employment Hubs are managed by a Prison Employment Lead (PEL) who works closely

with employers, organisations, the Department for Work and Pensions and others to support you. They can help you with

- writing C.V.'s, letters or job applications.
- guidance on career pathways.
- finding and applying for suitable jobs.
- information on how to access Universal Credit and other support on release from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Work and Thrive Central at Newcastle City library is Newcastle's free one-stop-shop for employment support. They can support you to find a job, fill a vacancy, or make the next step in your career.

Junction 42 help adults with criminal convictions in the North of Tyne area to find employment through 1 to 1 mentoring and group work.

The Oswin Project provides training, mentoring and access to employment for ex-offenders. The Oswin Project also run these employment schemes:

- Cafe 16 at Newcastle Cathedral a cafe using food created at Cafe 16 in HMP Northumberland.
- Changing the Cycle is a bicycle shop and bike maintenance service based at HMP Northumberland.

Catch22 provide Code 4000 a free, flexible 12-week course for women affected by the criminal justice system including ex offenders, victims of offences and women supporting them.

Read more about Support to prepare for work or a job

Health

You should find a local GP surgery and register yourself once you leave prison, this can help you access a range of physical and ,mental health services when you need them.

RECONNECT is a national service that helps people leaving prison with health needs to connect to and use community-based health and support services. You can ask your probation officer or police services to refer you to the RECONNECT service. They can offer support for up to 6 months after your release date, or when all health care needs are met.

You can also find support for your mental health and wellbeing from local mental health services and community organisations.

Read more about mental health support in Newcastle or Mental health emergency or crisis services on InformationNOW

Drug and alcohol support

SMART Recovery work within prisons, supported housing and in the community to support people recovering from addiction. They have a 4-point programme for people recovering from addiction, as well as holding peer-led meetings which help people to keep up with their recovery progress

PROPS supports families, carers and friends affected by a loved ones drug or alcohol misuse across Newcastle and North Tyneside

Read more on informationNOW about drug and alcohol support

Your wellbeing in the community

Leaving prison and re-settling back into community life can be difficult. For many people they find it important to:

- rebuild relationships with family and friends or finding ways to make new relationships
- find structure or a routine in the community, such as volunteering or looking for work
- learn new skills. Technology and work trends change quickly, so learning new skills can help to resettle.
- have a hobby. Joining a group, finding a new hobby or playing a sport can help to meet new people, socialise and manage your wellbeing

You can visit your local Newcastle Library to get access to the internet, job search resources, and assistance with online services. You can also find out more about what's happening in your community.

Get Online Newcastle offer free digital skills courses and help so you can get online and improve your digital skills.

Read more about hobbies and activities or find local groups and events on InformationNOW

Tips for people supporting someone leaving prison

Understand the Release Process and Conditions:

- They will likely be released with conditions, which they must follow, or risk being sent back to prison. They will likely be under probation or parole supervision, requiring regular check-ins with a probation officer.

Prepare for the Return

- You may need to adjust your household budget as spending will change. You no longer have to pay for prison visits or send money, however energy, food and other costs will likely go up as there is another person in the household.

- If you have children, talk to them about how they feel about the return, answer any questions they may have as this will be a big change to their daily life.

Offer Support and encourage connection

- Helping them to reconnect with their local community in positive ways can help with wellbeing, social isolation and build social or possible career connections.

Support your own wellbeing

- Supporting someone after leaving prison can be challenging, remember to take care of your own well-being. You may want to find support at groups, online or talk to someone about how you're feeling.

Other support

Clinks supports, promotes and advocates for the VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprise) sector working in criminal justice to ensure it can provide the services people need.

New futures network are a specialist service in HM prison and probation service that connect prisons with employers to help businesses fill job vacancies and prison leavers to find employment.

The Charles Hayward foundation fund projects which help to prevent people entering the criminal justice system, and which support those in contact with the system to rebuild their lives.

Resources

DWP – A Guide to Universal Credit for prison leavers gives information on what is needed to prepare for their Universal Credit claim, how the claim can be made and how the prison leaver can manage their claim.

Prison discharge policy – GOV.UK GOV.UK guide on the process of being discharged from prison, support available and where to access support.

Hardman Trust have a useful information for people leaving prison guide. The guide has information about leaving prison broken down into a timeline.

Last updated: May 21, 2025

Useful Organisations

Newcastle Probation Office

Website: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/newcastle-newcastle-probation-office

Telephone: 0191 261 9091

Address: Probation Office , NE1 4BN

PROPS

Email: office@propsnortheast.org.uk

Website: www.props.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 226 3440

Address: Fenham Library, NE4 9XD

Work and Thrive Central

Email: workandthrive@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: https://www.workandthrivenewcastle.org.uk/

Telephone: 0191 277 4125

Address: City Library, NE1 8AX

Newcastle Foodbank

Email: laura@nclwefb.org.uk

Website: https://newcastlewestend.foodbank.org.uk/

Telephone: 0191 275 3019

Address: Newcastle Food Bank Centre, NE15 6LX

Junction 42

Email: info@junction42.org

Website: https://www.junction42.org/

Telephone: 0191 261 2684

Address: Brunswick Methodist Church, NE1 7BJ

Related Articles

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Drug and alcohol support

Food banks and free emergency food in Newcastle

Free meals and affordable food in Newcastle

Support for people with low incomes

Support to prepare for work or a job

Homeless or worried about becoming homeless

Mental Health