

## Preparing for return

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All prisoners prepare for release and resettlement into the community and should have opportunities to work with prison or probation staff to produce a resettlement plan. For FNPs who may be returning to their country of origin and for staff working with them the process can be particularly challenging as there may be a number of unknowns such as what kind of systems operate in the receiving country, what help may be available etc.

Regardless of where in the world an FNP may be removed to there are certain actions which he or she can take to prepare for this. The following sections outline some thoughts around mental and practical preparation for removal.

More comprehensive information regarding particular countries can be found in the country information [Tracks Library > Resettlement Abroad]. Information about organisations who may be able to provide some assistance in other countries can be found in international resource directory [Tracks Library > Resettlement Abroad].

### **Mental preparation – getting into a positive mind-set**

How a person prepares mentally for the process of deportation will primarily depend on whether they want to return to their country or whether they do not want to be deported.

The English saying ‘hope for the best, plan for the worst’ has an equivalent in many other cultures such as the Bedouin saying ‘trust in God but tie your camel’. If you do not want to be deported then thinking about and planning for deportation can feel like an expectation of failure. However, even if you do not want to be deported and expect to remain in the UK it is important to have a back-up plan in case things do not go as you hope.

You may find it helpful to write down a ‘best-case scenario’ and a ‘worst-case scenario’. In both possible outcomes there are likely to be things that you need to find out more about and maybe make some preparation for. By thinking about these you can identify things you can do to improve your situation in each possible scenario.

Even for those who want to or at least who are not resisting deportation, the thought of being returned to your country after a period of absence can be frightening or can

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cause some level of anxiety about what might happen when you arrive. One way to combat this anxiety can be to plan and prepare as much as possible for your return.

Other techniques to control worry and fear about deportation might include;

- Talking to a trusted friend or counsellor about the process
- Share your thoughts and concerns with prison and probation staff
- Meditating or trying other similar techniques for the relief of stress
- Praying or taking part in religious services
- Expressing your feelings by writing them down
- Exercising – keeping as physically well as you can

If you are becoming very anxious or depressed by the thought of deportation then you may need to talk to a doctor about whether it might be appropriate to prescribe medication to help you.

## **Practical preparation**

If you are facing the possibility of deportation then there are certain practical things that you might do to prepare. At all times the person facing deportation should be considering what might be helpful to them and what would not. Below are some suggestions of things that you might want to think about when planning for deportation. Not all of them will be relevant to everyone and there may be other issues which you need to consider but this gives some points to consider.

## **General**

### **Contact your family and friends**

Family or friends in your own country can be invaluable if they are able to offer you any help or support on return.

It can sometimes be difficult to approach family and friends for help – relationships may not be good, you may feel that it would injure your pride or you may be reluctant to ask for help because you feel ashamed or because your family have limited resources with which they may be able to help.

If you are finding it difficult to approach family or friends for any of the reasons set out above it may help to think through carefully how your family or friends may be able to help you and how you might approach them. If we were approaching a potential employer for a job we would plan carefully how we approached that person and what we intended to say to someone. It can sometimes be helpful to do a similar thing in your personal life if you are finding it difficult to approach someone. You may wish to write down or make a mental note of what points you want to make to someone or what exactly it is that you hope that they can give you before you speak to them or write a letter to them.

If you still feel unable to approach your family you may wish to consider asking a

trusted third party to talk to them on your behalf, possibly a family friend or similar person.

You may need to be realistic about what help your family can offer you but at the same time you should not underestimate the importance of emotional support which family and friends may be able to offer even if they struggle to provide more practical assistance.

**Tracing family members**

Alternatively, there may be practical barriers such as if you do not know where your family members are and so are unable to contact them. If this is the case then you may be able to seek assistance from the Red Cross. If you contact your nearest Red Cross office then they will take information from you about your family members and use their international contacts to try to trace them. The Red Cross may also be able to get messages to family when the normal postal systems etc. have broken down due to conflict. To find out the contact details of your nearest Red Cross office you may have to ask a staff member to access the Red Cross internet site and search <http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Finding-missing-family/International-family-tracing>

This site also contains information about the family tracing and messaging services in a range of languages.

**Contact your consulate**

Your consulate or high commission may have some information which could help you to prepare for return. Sometimes the prison may automatically contact your consulate when you are sentenced. See the section on consular contact for more information on this [link to relevant section].

Resources available and attitudes to this vary widely so there is no standard package of help which you should expect from an embassy/high commission. However, they may be able to put you in touch with useful organisations which can help you on your return, help you to get important identification documents or provide advice.

**Contact voluntary or religious organisations**

There are many religious and voluntary organisations throughout the world carrying out social welfare activities and helping people in need. Some of these have projects specifically aimed at people who have been in prison or at migrants. We have gathered details of some organisations which may be helpful in the country specific sections [list of country specific sections] and in the general directory [link to directory]. If you are struggling to find organisations in your country it may be worth looking up community or religious organisations in the UK for people from your country and asking them if they are able to provide any useful information or contacts.

When contacting organisations it is important to think about what you are asking for and how you phrase your request. It is always useful to include something like, “if you are unable to help me can you suggest any other organisations who might be able to

help?”.

**Find out what will happen in the process**

Sometimes it can be helpful to have a better idea of the processes which are part of deportation. You may want to talk to prison staff/professionals, your Criminal Casework Unit caseworker or your embassy about what to expect. Other prisoners may also be a useful source of information but do be aware that sometimes rumours which have little factual basis get given out as fact, particularly in prisons where it can be difficult to access accurate information. When considering the information you should consider its source how that might impact on its accuracy.

**Health**

**Pre-existing conditions**

If you have a pre-existing medical condition for which you are receiving treatment you should discuss with a doctor how you can ensure that you continue to receive appropriate treatment during the deportation process.

If you are taking medication you should discuss with your doctor whether it is possible for them to prescribe you a large stock of medication as close to your removal date as possible so that you have a supply to keep you going for some time.

You should also research where you might get treatment on return to your country. You may be able to find details of a hospital or other medical practitioner upon return or identify where you can purchase medication if required.

You should consider what documents you may need to access medical treatment in your country. If you do not have the correct documents you may wish to contact your consulate or high commission to ask how you might obtain the documents required.

**Other health considerations**

Think about any particular risk factors which may impact you.

**Malaria**

If your country is classified as a high-risk malarial area then you may need to consider taking anti-malarial medication prior to removal. While people who live in high-risk malarial areas usually develop some immunity to malarial infections this is quickly lost when a person leaves the malarial area. You should speak to a doctor about this well in advance of any possible return as a course of anti-malarial treatment usually needs to be taken over a period of time.

**Pregnancy**

Medical professionals generally advise that a woman who is in the final trimester of pregnancy or who has given birth recently should not fly. In some cases, if there is a high risk of miscarriage or other complications, a doctor might advise against flying at a

much earlier stage of pregnancy. If you are pregnant and facing deportation you should ensure that your Immigration caseworker is aware of your situation. In addition, most anti-malarial drugs are not recommended for women during pregnancy so you may need to discuss this with a doctor.

**Housing**

In the short term it is important to consider where you will stay immediately upon return to your country. If your flight returns late at night then you may need to consider whether it will be possible to travel onwards from the airport or whether you might need to stay somewhere close by until the next day.

Once you arrive home, if you do not have accommodation, you should consider where you might stay while you look for accommodation. It might be possible for family or friends to assist you, if only for a short time, while you look at other possibilities.

If you are lucky enough to be returning to existing accommodation then you should consider if there is anything which needs to be done before you arrive, for example ensuring that the property is linked to utilities or giving notice to anyone who has been staying in the property in your absence.

**Employment**

**Making the most of prison resources**

There are usually many resources available in prison to help you to improve your prospects of finding work when you are released. It is important to find out what resources there are and to take full advantage of any opportunities offered to you to improve your prospects.

In most prisons there are employment and careers advisers who can talk to you about what it is that you want to do. You may have very clear ideas about what it is that you want to do and need advice about how to achieve your goal or you may be unsure and find it helpful to talk to someone about what your interests are, what you are good at and what it is realistic to consider.

You should consider the employment situation in your country and how the courses and work available in prison might benefit you once you return home. For example, in many countries which have a large tourism industry it may be an advantage to speak good English, so it might be useful to improve your English in classes provided by the prison, or to practice your spoken English in a customer service environment.

**Preparing a CV**

Employment advisers may be able to help you to prepare a Curriculum Vitae, known as a CV, which you can give to potential employers to tell them about you and what skills and qualifications you have. You should remember that while the employment advisers are experts in preparation of CVs for people seeking work in the UK, you may need to

think about what is expected from a CV in your home country. For example, in some countries it is common to include a photograph with a CV, or what personal details you are expected to include varies from country to country. If you are unsure what the practice is in your country then you may consider seeking advice. Your consulate or high commission may be able to suggest an organisation who can advise you further on this.

**Qualifications and references**

If you have qualifications, either gained in prison or previously, you should think about whether you have proof of qualifications gained or certificates for courses attended. If you have lost your certificates you may be able to apply to the examining body or place of study for replacement certificates, but you may be charged for replacements.

If you have worked for any employers in the past you should consider approaching them for a reference. This should only be considered if you worked well in that job and left on good terms with your employer.

**Who else can help you to find work?**

In many countries It can be useful to think through your contacts in your home country to consider if anyone there may be able to help you to find work. It may be that friends or members of your family may work in the industries in which you are interested and may have contacts that they can approach on your behalf. You may have your own contacts through previous employment who could be of help.

**What are you leaving behind?**

**Property**

Airlines impose restrictions on the number and weight of luggage items which you can travel with. If you have amassed a lot of possessions during your time in prison or in the UK you may not be able to take everything with you. Neither the ERS or the FRS have any provision for paying for excess baggage.

If you have property in the UK which you do not have in prison you may want to consider how you might recover it if you wish to take it home with you. If your family or friends in the UK are looking after property on your behalf you will need to talk to the prison staff about what arrangements may be possible for them to give the property to you ready for your departure.

**Family and friends in the UK?**

If you have family and friends in the UK that you wish to keep in touch with ensure that you have telephone numbers and/or e-mail details in a safe place. It might be a good idea to agree with some family members a suitable time for you to telephone them to ensure that they are available.

## **Preparing for the journey**

### **Travel to the airport**

You should consider the travel period from the prison/detention centre to the airport. The length of journey and whether you will stay overnight or even for several nights in another facility will depend upon a number of factors including the date and time of your flight (particularly if your flight is on a Monday or after a public holiday), the distance to the airport and the practice of the agency who transport you.

It is possible that once packed, you will be unable to access your luggage again until you arrive at the airport, even if you are staying overnight at another facility. You should discuss with prison staff what you are able to take as part of your hand luggage and include anything that you may need to access before the flight.

You should be aware that if you are staying for a night or longer at an Immigration Removal Centre that the facilities and regime may be very different to that of a prison. For example, in some cases women awaiting removal are kept in short term holding facilities in an Immigration Removal Centre which is primarily a male facility. This means that there is very limited access to the communal parts of the IRC and to any services. However, most IRCs have a chaplaincy service and it may be possible to contact the chaplaincy before arrival and request a visit if you would like one.

### **Arrival**

Arrival at the airport is, of course, not the end of your journey home. You should consider if anyone is able to meet you at the airport or, if not, how you will make your way from the airport to somewhere where you can spend the night.

If you are travelling alone from the airport you will need to consider your transport options and the cost of travel. You will need to ensure that you are able to exchange money for local currency upon arrival.

## **What comes next**

### **Family**

During your time away from your family you may have spent long hours thinking about them and how good it will be to be back with them. Therefore, if, when you get home, you find that there are problems when you return to your family you can become angry, confused or upset by this.

You may find that different family members react very differently to your return. Remember that they may also have been under strain during your time away and that they too need time to adjust to your return.

It is not unusual for marriages or other long-term relationships to break down while

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one party is serving a prison sentence. If your relationship has survived this far then it is worth investing time and care in the relationship to strengthen it.

### **Children**

It can be difficult for a child who has not seen a parent for a long time to feel comfortable around them. Younger children may have little memory of the returning parent and may treat them as a stranger. Children of any age may feel angry with the returning parent for their absence or worry that the parent may disappear again. They may react angrily or withdraw from the parent. If this happens it can feel to the parent as though the child is rejecting them.

Rebuilding relationships with children takes time and patience; it can't be rushed. There may be courses on relationship building in families available at your prison, but if not these few tips might be helpful.

- Don't expect children to sever the relationship with the person/people who have been substitutes for the absent parent and don't display jealousy about that relationship. If you act as though you are jealous you will make the child feel uncomfortable about mentioning the other person and guilty for their feelings. It is natural that a child will form bonds with other people in your absence. It does not mean that they love you less but can be a positive thing as it can give them a stronger support network.
- Don't expect children to behave in the same way with you as they did when you last saw them. In addition to your absence, your child will have grown and developed while you were away. Most children as they grow older will go through phases where they may become more introverted or uncomfortable about displaying physical affection. Don't push them too hard - respect their boundaries.
- Be honest with your child about what has happened to you. It may be tempting to lie to try to protect them but this could further damage the trust between you. Try to answer their questions truthfully while being aware of what is age appropriate.
- Take time to talk to your child/children and to listen to them and let them express their feelings. Like you, your child may have had unrealistic expectations about how wonderful things would be when you returned and they may feel confused about their own shyness or anger towards you.
- If your child is unwilling to talk to you encourage them to talk to another adult that they trust, maybe a family member or a teacher. It may be hard to think that they would prefer to talk to someone else but we often find it easier to talk to someone who is not emotionally involved in a situation.
- Remember that your child may have been teased or bullied at school or made to feel ashamed because of your imprisonment. Don't be afraid to say sorry to your child if they feel let down by what you have done.
- If your relationship with the child's other parent has broken down while you have been away be mindful of the additional strain that this might put on your child. If you can maintain a good and respectful relationship with your former partner despite the problems this will be of great benefit to your child.



## **Employment**

Different countries will have different regulations about whether or not a job applicant needs to declare any criminal convictions and you may need to seek expert advice on this.

It is easy to say ‘honesty is the best policy’, but when you are applying for jobs in a competitive market it is tempting not to disclose that you have spent time in prison. Remember, if you lie about your past and that is later discovered then you will almost certainly be sacked from your job. If you chose just not to say anything and leave a gap in your CV, a prospective employer may ask about what you were doing during that period of time.

Many people feel that if they can avoid disclosing the conviction on their initial written application then it is better to tell the prospective employer about it in person if they get through to an interview stage. At whatever stage you chose to tell a prospective employer about your conviction it is important to think carefully about what you will say. Think about what you have learnt from the experience and insights that it has given you and how that learning might help you in future. Of course, it cannot be denied that some prospective employers will turn away any applicant who they know to have a criminal record and some offences may bar you from taking up particular work, but never think that it will mean that you will never get any job.

## **Return to the UK**

If you have been deported from the UK then there is a ban on return. If you return to the UK while you are subject to a ban this is a criminal offence and could result in you being returned to prison. It is possible to apply for a re-entry ban to be lifted, usually after a minimum of 10 years, but it is rare for a ban to be revoked without very compelling reasons.

If you have been administratively removed from the UK there is also likely to be a ban on re-entry, although this may be time-limited (usually between 3 and 5 years). However, even once the ban expires any applications for entry into the UK will consider both previous immigration history and any criminal convictions so it is likely to be extremely challenging to obtain permission to come back.