

Prisoners - phone calls

If you're in prison, it's very important to keep in touch with family and friends. This fact sheet is about keeping in touch by phone. Friends and family can't phone into a prison to speak to a prisoner. There are rules about the phone calls that a prisoner can make.

Who can you make phone calls to when you're in prison

If you're in prison, you can make telephone calls using the PINphone system. You have your own PIN number to use when making a call. In some prisons, you can only call certain numbers that you have already given to the prison and which have been approved by them. In other prisons, you can call any number except for numbers barred by the prison. In all prisons, you aren't allowed to ring certain premium rate numbers which may include chatlines or adult-only lines. The length of calls you can make may be limited.

All telephone calls made by prisoners are recorded and may be monitored at any time. This doesn't apply to open prisons and it doesn't apply to calls to the following people:-

- your legal advisers
- the Independent Monitoring Board
- the Criminal Cases Review Commission
- the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman Office
- the Samaritans.

These types of call are called **confidential calls**.

If you're a Category A prisoner, your calls are more strictly controlled.

There are rules about what can be said in a phone call. For example, you can't talk about things that are considered to be a threat to prison security or which are racist. If you break the rules, you may be cut off.

You might be allowed to use the prison's official telephone for urgent compassionate calls. You'll have to pay for these calls unless the governor is satisfied you can't afford to. Some prisons allow a free short phone call home as soon as you arrive at prison from court. Other prisons allow you to make a short call and then take away the cost of your call from your PINphone account later on.

Contacting legal advisers

You have the right to make confidential telephone calls to your legal adviser. This means a solicitor, barrister or anyone working for them directly. You aren't allowed to make confidential calls to Citizens Advice Bureaux. In exceptional circumstances, you may be allowed to use the official prison telephone for urgent legal calls.

Foreign national prisoners

Foreign national prisoners are allowed one free five-minute overseas call per month, instead of visits.

Complaints about phone calls

If you're a prisoner who wants to complain about problems with making phone calls, use the normal complaints procedure. It's against the law to treat you unfairly, for example, because you're disabled or because of your race or ethnic origin. This is called discrimination. If discrimination is involved in a problem with phone calls, make sure this is mentioned in the complaint.

Further help

Prisoners' Advisory Service

PO Box 46199
London
EC1M 4XA

Tel: 020 7253 3323 or 0845 430 8923
(Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am-1pm and 2pm-5.30pm)
Fax: 020 7253 8067
E-mail: advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk
Website: www.prisonersadvice.org.uk

The Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) provides advice and information to prisoners on their rights as prisoners. PAS does not deal with miscarriages of justice or appeals against conviction or sentence.

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve any sort of problem.

Some Citizens Advice Bureaux run advice sessions in prison. If you're in prison, check if they run these sessions in your prison. If they don't run advice sessions, you could write to them explaining your problem. Ask a member of the prison staff for the address of your local CAB.

If you are not in prison, and you want to find your nearest CAB, including those that give advice by e-mail, click on [nearest CAB](#), or look under C in your phone book.

www.adviceguide.org.uk

Other fact sheets on Adviceguide which might help

- Prisoners – letters
- Prisoners – visits
- Prisoners – making a complaint
- Prisoners – getting further help
- Discrimination in prison

This fact sheet is produced by [Citizens Advice](#), an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law. The information applies to England and Wales only.

This fact sheet was last updated on 18 October 2010 and is reviewed on a monthly basis. If it is some time since you obtained this fact sheet, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to check if it is still correct. Or visit our website - www.adviceguide.org.uk - where you can download an up-to-date copy.