

INFORMATION ON PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Do you want the inmate to return home?

Adjusting back to life in the community can be difficult and your family member may look to you to provide a place for them to live.

You might feel pressured to agree to them returning home even if you do not want to. It is not unusual for people to feel guilty about this and ask themselves questions such as 'what kind of parent / partner am I if I don't let them come home?'

If you don't want your family member to return home, it is important to let them know before they are released so that prison staff can help them make other arrangements.

Relationships

You may have had to take on tasks previously done by the inmate. This could include making decisions about money and making all the day-to-day decisions for the family. Even if you are happy for your family member to return home there can be many challenges as they renegotiate their place in the family.

Relationships that weren't so good before are unlikely to have got better while your family member was away. It can take a while to readjust to having each other around. It is not unusual to think your family member might have changed for the better and then be disappointed if this hasn't happened.

Children may respond in a range of ways. Younger children may feel drawn to the returning parent, or may feel insecure about their return. Older children may resent a parent's attempts to discipline them, or may be protective of the other parent who has been raising them.

Resuming care of children

Where children have been in the care of others, carers may feel very protective of them, and may be cautious about the inmate resuming their care. Children may be hesitant about returning to parents, or may feel torn between their parent and their carers. Parents may have high hopes for life after prison, but may find the reality somewhat different to their expectations. Preparation of children and discussion of the possible issues between the parent and carers prior to the inmate's release can reduce some of these difficulties.

Health Issues

The rates of Hepatitis C are very high among prisoner populations. It is spread through blood-to-blood contact (eg sharing needles) but rarely through sexual contact unless blood is present. Hepatitis C affects the liver and can have long term, even life threatening effects on health.

Tests are available for Hepatitis C, and are recommended where people believe they may have been exposed to the disease.

It can be difficult to discuss possible Hepatitis C transmission, but there are benefits if this can be done calmly and openly. Similarly, the possibility of HIV infection where when one or more partners have been injecting drugs should be considered.

Involvement with Probation and Parole

If your family member is released on parole, a Parole officer will need to check the address which the inmate has given as the one where they will be living on release.

After release the inmate will be required to visit their Parole Officer regularly, and that officer may also see them at home. They will also have to comply with various conditions. If their Probation and Parole Officer becomes aware that they are not keeping to those conditions, this could result in the person being sent back to gaol. Probation and Parole Officers can also help people access services and programmes, both in the community, and those run by Probation and Parole.

You will need to accept the role of the Probation and Parole Officer, even if this may feel intrusive. You may find it difficult if you become aware that a family member is breaching the conditions of their parole, knowing that there could be serious consequences