1. Children or other people you look after

- If you need to sort out care for children or other people you look after, tell prison staff straight away.

Child Support Agency Payments

- If you have been paying child maintenance money, you need to let the Child Support Agency know that you are in prison.

- You must tell the Child Support Agency within 1 week about this. It is a criminal offence if you do not tell them within a week of any changes.

- You do not have to pay child maintenance if you are not working or getting benefits.

You can write to them at

Child Support Agency
National Helpline
PO Box 55
Brierly Hill
DY5 1YL

Telephone 08457 138 924
2. Benefits

If you already get benefits

- Talk to your local Jobcentre Plus office as soon as possible to sort things out. Or ask someone in your family to do it.

- If you are in prison for over 21 days, the only benefit you will normally be able to get is Housing Benefit.

- If you think your Jobcentre Plus office owes you some benefit money then write to them and ask them to send you the money in prison. They will need to send a giro made out to the governor. The money will then be paid into your private cash.

- If you cannot get this money, you can claim it after you are released.

If you were working

- Your family may need to claim benefits while you are in prison or on remand.

- They should contact the local Jobcentre Plus office as soon as possible.

Make sure you contact your Jobcentre Plus office as soon as possible. If not, you or your family may have trouble getting benefits now and after you are released.

3. Paying rent or mortgage

- You or your family may be able to get Housing Benefit to help pay the rent or mortgage.

- It is a good idea to get advice about this as it will depend on whether you have been convicted or are on remand.
Paying rent - what to do

Write to your landlord or estate agent to let them know you are in prison. Tell them
- How long you will be in prison.
- Whether anyone will be looking after your home.

If you were living with your family and already getting Housing Benefit
- Write to the Housing Benefit Office to tell them you are in prison.
- Your family should also write to them to ask to take over your benefits while you are in prison.

If your family needs to start getting Housing Benefit
- They should write to the Housing Benefit Office to make a claim for Housing Benefit.

If you were living on your own
- You can claim Housing Benefit while you are on remand for up to 52 weeks. Or if you will be in prison for less than 13 weeks.
- If you were not getting Housing Benefit already, write to your local council to ask for a form to claim it.

If you cannot pay the rent and you cannot get housing benefit
- You may want to give your home back to the landlord or the estate agent. This may be better than owing them lots of money and getting into debt.
- Your landlord may agree to find you somewhere else to live when you get out of prison.
- Ask NACRO or the Citizens’ Advice Bureau for advice first.
- These organisations may visit the prison. If not, you can call NACRO on 0800 0181 259
Your mortgage

You or your family may be able to get help with paying the interest part of your mortgage if

- you lived with your family and they are staying on in the home
- you have not been convicted or if you are waiting for your sentence, and you are buying a home by yourself.

What to do

✓ You or your family should write to the local Jobcentre Plus office if you or they want to claim Housing Benefit.

✓ Make sure you tell your Mortgage Company, bank or building society you are in prison.

✓ Also tell them what you think will happen. For example, if you want to pay the interest part of your mortgage only. Or if you think you will not be able to pay at all.

✓ You may be able to stop the payments for a bit. Or sell the house.

How the Housing Benefit will be paid

If you bought your home before 2 October 1995

- Week 1 to 8 You will get no money for housing costs
- Week 9 to 27 You will get half the money
- From week 27 You will get all the money

If you bought your home after 2 October 1995

- Week 1 to 39 You will get no money for housing costs
- From Week 39 You will get all the money
4. Council Tax

What to do

✓ Tell your local council you are in prison. You may not have to pay council tax or your family may have to pay less council tax.

✓ You should get a leaflet about council tax when you first get to prison. There should be some forms with the leaflet. Fill in the forms to contact your local council.

5. Bills like water, gas, electricity and telephone

You cannot get any help with these while you are in prison.

What to do

✓ You could write to the companies to tell them you are in prison. Ask staff for help to write the letter.

✓ You could ask them if you could pay the bills when you leave prison. Or you could ask for the gas, water or electricity to be cut off.

6. National Insurance

If you paid National Insurance before coming to prison

- You will not get paid any National Insurance while you are in prison.
- But if you are aged 16 to 18 years old you will get tax credits.
- You can also get credits if you are aged 60 to 65.
National Insurance money you pay

While in prison

You cannot pay

- Types of National Insurance called Class 1 and Class 2 (to do with being in a job).
- But you may be able to pay this if you are on a special project while in prison. For example, where you get paid for doing work in the community.

You can pay

- A type of National Insurance called class 3.
- If you stop paying this type of National Insurance, your pension or bereavement benefit may be affected. This depends on things like how long your sentence is.

To find out more get in touch with your JobCentre Plus office or write to

HM Revenue & Customs
National Insurance Contributions Office
Benton Park View
Newcastle on Tyne
NE98 1ZZ

Telephone 0845 302 1479
7. Your state pension

You will **not** get your state pension

- If you have been sentenced.
- While you are on remand or waiting for your trial.

You **will** get your pension

- If you are released without being sentenced. You will get the money when you are released.

If you have a partner

- Your partner will still get their pension when you are in prison unless they get something called **dependent’s increase**.

- They should check with their Jobcentre Plus office if they are not sure.

For more information, write to the Pension Service at

National Pension Centre
Tyneview Park
Whitley Road
Benton
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE98 1BA

Telephone 0845 6060 265
8. Income tax

- It is important that you keep a check on anything to do with your tax while you are in prison.

- An organisation like the Citizens Advice Bureau may come into your prison and be able to help you sort your tax out.

What to do

- Contact your tax office if you need help. Tell them your National Insurance Number and reference number if you can.

- Ask the local tax office if you are not sure which tax office is yours.

- You will still need to fill in your tax forms if you are sent any. Or if you have any income you need to tell them about.

- Someone can contact the tax office for you. But you will need to put something in writing to say it is ok for them to do that.

- If your employer is keeping your job for you while you are in prison, ask them to put this in writing so you have a record of it.

- You can still get your personal allowances while you are in prison. Your personal allowance is the amount of income you can get every year without having to pay tax on it.

You could contact your tax office to find out

- If you can change Children’s Tax Credit money to your wife or partner’s name, if they are working.

- If you can get back tax that is taken from your bank or building society interest. You have to fill in a form to do this.

- If you can get back income tax you have paid since 5 April, if you have a job and have a document called a P45.

- Or to get advice if you were working for yourself (self-employed).