



# **Life in prison: Earning and spending money**

A findings paper

by HM Inspectorate of Prisons

**January 2016**

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## Introduction

- I.1** This findings paper is part of a series which focuses on daily life in prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs) holding young adults (aged 18 to 21). The series explores particular topics that are regularly reported to us as an issue during our routine inspections. We hope these findings papers will give people an insight into the reality of life in prison, will be of interest to practitioners and be used to encourage good practice and further discussion. We expect that the findings and good practice detailed in this paper will support the development of prison services.
- I.2** This findings paper summarises literature surrounding earning and spending money in prison. It draws on evidence from recent inspections of adult prisons undertaken by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and survey data from inspection reports published between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015. This data is aggregated and overall responses for the year are presented. Comments from confidential prisoner surveys conducted as part of the inspection process are also included in this report; these quotes are not ascribed to individual prisons or inspection reports. The paper focuses on adult men and women held in prisons and young adults held in YOIs and the experiences they have earning and spending money in these prisons.

## Background

- I.3** How people earn and spend money in prison differs from the outside world. The most obvious difference is the absence of any physical money.
- I.4** Prisoners may have money from what they themselves bring into prison, what is sent in by family or friends or what they earn in prison. They can only spend money up to approved weekly limits depending on their remand or convicted status and their behaviour as assessed under the incentives and earned privileges scheme. Any money that is paid to prisoners for work, or sent in from their family, is stored by the prison and then transferred electronically to the prisoner on a weekly basis depending on their weekly spending limit.
- I.5** Although prison wages are low, prisoners do not have to pay for accommodation, their meals, basic toiletries or clothing if required. Some may be able to bring some approved items into prison with them or have them sent in by families or friends. Prisoners must provide for everything else themselves. They must purchase phone credit themselves and pay rent for a TV. Everything else must be purchased from the prison 'shop' or 'canteen'. In public sector prisons this consists of a list of items, such as tobacco, non-prescribed medication, additional food and toiletries, hobby materials and stationery, chosen to meet the particular needs of individual prison populations from a national product list (NPL) of approved items. Prisoners may also purchase other items such as clothing or religious artefacts from approved retail catalogues for which prisons charge an administration fee. Private sector prisons have their own canteen arrangements.
- I.6** The money that a convicted prisoner can spend is also restricted based on their behaviour and level on the incentives and earned privileges (IEP) scheme.<sup>1</sup> The maximum a convicted

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<sup>1</sup> The IEP scheme is a national scheme with four distinct levels: entry, basic, standard and enhanced. The scheme has the following aims: to encourage responsible behaviour by prisoners; to encourage effort and achievement in work and other constructive activity by prisoners; to encourage sentenced prisoners to engage in sentence planning and benefit from activities designed to reduce reoffending; and to create a more disciplined, better-controlled and safer environment for prisoners and staff. These aims are achieved by ensuring that privileges above the statutory minimum are earned by

prisoner is able to spend per week is £25.50. However, in practice most prisoners are limited to being able to spend £15.50. The amount of money which prisoners held on remand can access and spend, and what may be supplied to them by family are greater. These limits have not changed since 2008.

- I.7** All prisons also have an informal economy – trade in drugs and other unauthorised items used as currency often cause debt and this can be a significant cause of violence and distress. The acquisition and display of large volumes of desirable items such as toiletries may, as with other possessions outside prison, be used to denote status.<sup>2</sup> New prisoners are particularly susceptible to getting into debt through a lack of experience and knowledge about prison processes, and this can be exacerbated by long waits to access their legitimate funds and to receive a canteen order.
- I.8** Many prisoners enter prison with poor financial management skills. Nearly 20% of prisoners reported that they entered prison with money worries and a study by Unlock found that, in their sample, over half of prisoners entered prison with debt and a third of prisoners did not have a bank account when they entered prison.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that these prisoners are more vulnerable to badly managing their money in prison and getting into debt. A number of studies<sup>4</sup> have shown that prisoners' families are often experiencing extreme financial hardship. This may be exacerbated by the loss of the prisoner's wage, and often, prisoners' families will only be able to provide limited assistance to the family member in prison.

## Our expectations

- I.9** We inspect against criteria known as *Expectations*.<sup>5</sup> These are the expected standards by which we assess treatment and conditions for prisoners, and each inspection assesses the outcomes for the prisoners held in that establishment against them. Each expectation is underpinned by 'indicators' which set out what inspectors would normally expect to find if the expectation is met. Prisoner pay is assessed under three healthy prison areas – safety, respect and purposeful activity – and canteen is assessed under respect.

### Pay

- The IEP scheme is proportionate and applied fairly, transparently and consistently.  
*Indicators:*
  - Prisoners with the same job and differing IEP status do not receive different levels of pay.
  - Enhanced prisoners may receive a financial bonus which is unrelated to their work pay.
- Older prisoners are treated equitably and according to their individual needs.  
*Indicators:*
  - Minimum retirement pay is set at a level that is sufficient for those who do not have another source of income.
  - Prisoners over retirement age do not have to pay for their TV.

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prisoners through good behaviour and performance and are removed if they fail to maintain acceptable standards (National Offender Management Service PSI 30/2013).

<sup>2</sup> Walker, F.D. (2015) The informal economy in prison. *Centre for crime and justice studies*, 99 (1), 18–19.

<sup>3</sup> Bath, C. and Edgar, K. (2010) *Time is Money: Financial responsibility after prison*.

<sup>4</sup> For example: Smith, R., Grimshaw, R., Romeo, R. and Knapp, M. (2007) *Poverty and disadvantage among prisoners' families*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; and Dickie, D. (2013) *The Financial Impact of Imprisonment on Families*. Families Outside.

<sup>5</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2012) *Expectations: Criteria for assessing the treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons*. London: HMIP; HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2012) *Expectations: Criteria for assessing the treatment of children and young people and conditions in prisons*. London: HMIP; HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2014) *Expectations: Criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for women in prisons*. London: HMIP.

- All prisoners are occupied purposefully during the core day.

*Indicator:*

- *Pay rates are equitable.*

### **Canteen**

- Prisoners can purchase a suitable range of goods at reasonable prices to meet their diverse needs, and can do that safely.

*Indicators:*

- *Prisoners have access to a wide range of all products on offer and the range and cost of the items are comparable to that of a local supermarket.*
- *Any price changes during the last six months can be justified by changes in prices outside the prison.*
- *All prisoners are able to access accurate and up to date records of their finances.*

## **Our findings**

### **Prisoners' earnings**

**I.10** Prisoners can earn money in various ways while in prison. Paid purposeful activity is available to many, but not all, prisoners. These activities include education and training, prison services jobs such as cleaning or mentoring, and commercial workshops within prisons. There are also a relatively small number of prisoners who have access to release on temporary licence (ROTL) who are paid by external employers. For those who do not take part in purposeful activity, retirement pay is offered to those who are above the national retirement age and choose not to work, and a base rate of unemployment pay is offered to those who are unable to work in the prison and for unconvicted prisoners<sup>6</sup> who have the right to choose not to work.

**I.11** In 1964 the Prison Service rules indicated that prisoners may be paid for the purposeful activity they take part in. The current minimum rate of pay in England and Wales was set in Prison Service Order 4460, issued in 2002. It requires:

- that all prisoners who are in some form of employment have to earn the minimum of £4 a week, although they can earn more; in 2010 the average working prisoner earned £10 a week<sup>7</sup>
- a mandatory rate of pay of £3.25 a week for those who are unable to work for health reasons or have reached retirement age
- that those who wish to work, but are unable to due to a lack of activity places in the prison, are paid a minimum of £2.50 a week
- that unconvicted prisoners who choose to work are paid the same as convicted prisoners.

**I.12** These rates of pay have remained unchanged since the PSO was introduced in 2002. In 2008 an attempt by the Prison Service to increase minimum pay from £4 to £5.50 a week was

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<sup>6</sup> Prisoners who have yet to be found innocent or guilty, but excluding those who have been found guilty and are being held awaiting sentence.

<sup>7</sup> Bath, C. and Edgar, K. (2010) *Time is Money: Financial responsibility after prison.*

vetoed by the then Prime Minister.<sup>8</sup> There are also a relatively small number of prisoners whose earnings are reduced because they are repaying damage that they have done to prison property. Since 2011, prisoners who are undertaking paid work in the community and earning in excess of £20 a week may be subject to a levy of up to 40% on their earnings. The funds that the levy generates are paid to Victim Support, a national charity which supports victims and communities affected by crime. During 2014/15 £1.1 million was raised from the imposition of the levy on prisoners' earnings to be paid to victim support, bringing the total raised since October 2011 to £3.3 million.<sup>9</sup> Prisoners who earn more than £20 are often working outside of the prison on release on temporary license (ROTL) and as a result have more outgoing costs, for example travel expenditures. Despite initial concerns however, we have not found evidence on inspections that the levy has been a disincentive to prisoners using ROTL for outside employment or reduced the number of outside employment opportunities available. Family or friends can also send in money to be added to a prisoner's account. However, a prisoner cannot access all this money at once. Each week, money from their private account is moved into their spending account. How much money is transferred depends on their weekly allowance (see paragraph 1.26).

### Differences in pay across jobs and prisons

**1.13** As PSO 4460 only sets out a minimum rate, the rates of pay can vary greatly, usually as a result of the following factors.

- The prison in which they are held. PSO 4460 allows for governors and directors to set the rate of pay in their establishment. This allows for those in some prisons, such as open prisons, to earn more than those in closed prisons.
- A prisoner's incentives and earned privileges (IEP) level. PSI 30/2013 (2013) allows governors to set local pay rates above the minimum to 'encourage and reward prisoner's constructive participation in the regime'. Those on enhanced status can earn a higher rate of pay.<sup>10</sup> Prisoners doing the same job may therefore earn different wages.
- The type of employment, education or training a prisoner takes part in. Inspections have identified, for example, that those taking part in education or an offending behaviour course can earn less than those in employment or carrying out manual work in a workshop. This can act as a disincentive for a prisoner to take part in education or an offending behaviour programme, even where these would better meet their needs and help reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend.

**1.14** Those not taking part in education, training or employment may receive a very small allowance. Retirement pay is inadequate to meet even minimal additional needs beyond those that are met by the prison and so retired prisoners may often choose to work so they can supplement the basic 'retirement pay'. Those who are unable to work (for health reasons or due to a lack of activity places) either struggle financially in prison or rely on family or friends to send additional money if they can.

<sup>8</sup> BBC (2008) *Planned prison pay rise abandoned*. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7374276.stm> [accessed 15 December 2015].

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/449925/mi-addendum.pdf\\_-\\_Adobe\\_Acrobat\\_Pro.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449925/mi-addendum.pdf_-_Adobe_Acrobat_Pro.pdf) [accessed 20 January 2015].

<sup>10</sup> PSI 30/2013

## Spending money

- I.15** Prisoners are not allowed to handle cash in prison. Any money that a prisoner has sent in, is held in a private account which the prison manages and any money that a prisoner earns, is held in a spending account. This account is used by the prisoner to make the purchases they need while in prison and any remaining credit is given to them on their release. Prisoners can request one free printout of their account balance each month, although some establishments may charge the prisoner if they request more than one printout per month; this is sometimes a slow process. Electronic kiosks are becoming a more common alternative to paper-based systems, particularly in private prisons, and provide an easier way for prisoners to carry out daily tasks, including checking their account balance and placing canteen orders. These kiosks are generally a positive development and enable prisoners to easily manage their own money, although they should not provide an excuse to reduce contact between prisoners and staff. Kiosks can provide information instantly, allowing a prisoner to know exactly how much money they have before they place their weekly canteen order.
- I.16** Being able to spend and manage their money, including weekly budgeting and making decisions about what to buy, provides prisoners with some preparation for life outside prison. Responsibility for budgeting and managing their own money in prison should supplement the support prisoners receive on finance, benefits and debt in preparation for release. For example, at HMP Altcourse (2014) inspectors were pleased to find that fortnightly debt advice sessions were available, as well as courses on financial advice to enable better financial management. Recent inspections have found that this support is variable and it is an important area for new community rehabilitation companies to develop and strengthen.
- I.17** The three things that most prisoners spend their money on are contacting family, television rental and buying items from the canteen.

## Telephone calls

- I.18** Maintaining family contact, where appropriate, is important for both the families of prisoners (particularly children) and prisoners themselves. In 2002, the Social Exclusion Unit highlighted the importance of prisoners maintaining contact with family members to reduce reoffending.<sup>11</sup> Prisoners are unable to receive incoming calls, so family contact relies on prisoners being able to access phones and being able to afford calls to family and friends. This is especially important for those being held a long way from home or whose family are unable or struggle to visit them.
- I.19** Prisoners buy telephone credit, which they can purchase in £1 increments through the canteen. Despite the recognition that maintaining contact is important, the cost of making a telephone call from prison can be expensive. At a recent inspection, calls to landlines were advertised as costing 9.17p per minute on weekdays and 8.16p per minute at weekends. Calls to mobiles were advertised as costing 20.4p per minute on weekdays and 13.2p per minute at weekends.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a 30-minute call to a landline costs £2.75 during the working week and £2.45 at weekends. However, many prisoners are limited to calling their friends and family on the call recipient's mobile phone, the rates for which are much higher than calling a landline, with a 30-minute call costing £6.12 during the week and £3.96 at the weekend. In contrast, calls from BT phone boxes cost a minimum of 60p, but give the caller up to 30 minutes of call time; this 60p set fee includes a 40p connection fee and two 10p

<sup>11</sup> The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*.

<sup>12</sup> These costs are calculated based on price rates on telephones during an inspection (week commencing 11/01/2016).

credits. One 10p credit equates to 15 minutes of call time to a landline or approximately one minute to a mobile phone.

- I.20** For foreign national prisoners contact with family can be much more difficult as their family may be abroad. They are unable to access the discounted international calls available in the community. A foreign national prisoner who does not receive visits because their family is abroad may receive assistance with the higher costs of international calls. At HMP Holloway, for instance, women are given additional phone credit every month if they have not received a domestic visit (HMP Holloway 2013).
- I.21** Supervised use of social media could provide a low cost alternative to expensive calls for both domestic and foreign national prisoners. For example, supervised access to Skype by risk-assessed prisoners would enable prisoners to maintain contact with children and other families when the cost of telephone calls and visits is prohibitively expensive.

### Television

- I.22** If a prisoner wishes to have a small television in their cell they must pay £1 a week rental. Where prisoners are sharing a cell this is split between all of the cell occupants.
- I.23** In the case of retired prisoners who are unable to work and have no other source of income, this amounts to about 30% of the retirement allowance of £3.25 and further diminishes older prisoners' quality of life. In the past, prisons have exercised some discretion about whether retired prisoners should be charged for their television. This is no longer the case.

### Canteen

- I.24** The canteen, or prison shop, is a service within prisons that allows prisoners to buy approved products. Since 2009, the canteen for public prisons has been placed under a national contract with DHL; private prisons make their own arrangements. To purchase items, prisoners select what they would like to buy using a canteen sheet (a sheet which lists the products they can choose from and the price). This is then sent to DHL, whose staff pick the items in a warehouse and deliver them to the prison the following week. The prison organises the delivery of the canteen items to each cell in an individual clear plastic bag, which allows the prisoner to check that the correct items have been delivered. This is a crucial process that has to be well managed in order to avoid theft or bullying. Canteen orders should be delivered at a time when prisoners are available to confirm that all the items they ordered are present. However, the delivery should be made in such a way that the items are not clear to everyone else on a landing, in case this makes the prisoner a target for bullies. For example, at HMP Brixton (2013) prison orderlies (trusted prisoners who are given extra responsibility in prison) were involved in the distribution process of canteen orders. Inspectors were concerned that orderlies would be aware of any prisoners who had bought high value goods, such as tobacco, potentially leaving them open to victimisation.
- I.25** The amount a prisoner can spend on their canteen order is capped, based on whether they are convicted or unconvicted, and what level of the IEP scheme they are on.<sup>13</sup> This spending cap is intended to encourage good behaviour and reduce the possibility that prisoners with money are bullied into buying items on behalf of other prisoners.
- I.26** Table I shows the maximum transfer limits from their private account to their spending account. Prisoners can use their money (and their earnings which are credited to their

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<sup>13</sup> PSI 30/2013



spending account) to purchase canteen items. These have remained unchanged since 2008 when PSI 30/2008 was issued.<sup>14</sup> Other than the rate for a convicted prisoner on basic level, the maximum expenditure allowed is higher than the average prisoner wage of £10, so would be dependent on funds being sent in. In our surveys, many prisoners identify the importance of having family who can send in additional money to help them afford items from the canteen.

**Table 1: Spending limits in the IEP scheme**

IEP level	Unconvicted	Convicted
Entry	£35	£10
Basic	£22	£4
Standard	£47.50	£15.50
Enhanced	£51	£25.50

### Access to canteen

**1.27** Fewer than a quarter (23%) of prisoners surveyed said that they had access to canteen when they first arrived in prison. In local prisons, where most prisoners begin their sentences, the proportion fell to 21%. The importance of a person's first days in a local prison has been highlighted in a previous findings paper, *The first 24 hours in prison*.<sup>15</sup> For many individuals, this is their first experience of prison life and they may not be sufficiently aware of the need to avoid borrowing and the associated debt. It can often take up to two weeks for a prisoner to receive their first canteen order. Prisoners should be given a reception pack on arrival but these packs are not designed to last two weeks. The content of reception packs varies across establishments but includes basic items such as teabags and snacks. Packs may be for smokers or non-smokers and smokers' packs will replace some items with tobacco of the same value.

**1.28** Delayed access to canteen is a concern for prisoners.

*'I have been here for nine days with no canteen. I have received money today but I won't get any canteen until day 20.'*<sup>16</sup>

In the interim, some prisons allow prisoners to receive extra reception packs until a regular canteen order is received. These extra packs, as well as the pack given to prisoners on reception, need to be paid for by the prisoner. Payment is usually in instalments; however, an inspection of HMP Hull (2014) found that prisoners were being charged for reception packs in full the week after their arrival in the prison, which left some without funds and vulnerable to borrowing and debt.

**1.29** Debt is a significant cause of bullying in prisons. Most prison populations operate a system still widely known as 'double bubble' – paying back twice what is borrowed. Failure to pay may lead to violence. In some cases prisoners moving into an empty cell inherit the debts of the previous occupant. Inspections frequently find poor distribution of reception packs, long waits for regular canteen, inadequate coverage at inductions about the risks of bullying and debt and insufficient action to tackle perpetrators and support victims. Prisoners with access to funds and goods, acquired either legitimately or through bullying, may arrange elaborate displays of toiletries or other items in their cells as a symbol of status and prestige.

<sup>14</sup> PSI 30/2008

<sup>15</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Life in prison: The first 24 hours. A findings paper by HM Inspectorate of Prisons*. London: HMIP.

<sup>16</sup> Comment from confidential prisoner survey conducted as part of the inspection process.

- I.30** At one open prison inspectors found that the prison had no facility for storing prisoners' canteen orders if they were out on temporary release (ROTL) the day the order was delivered. To prevent the risk of items being taken while they were out of the prison, prisoners relied on other prisoners to collect their orders for them, with some being charged for this 'service'. Many inspections report inadequate secure storage in cells. Prisons need to ensure that every prisoner has access to a lockable cupboard in their cell and that facilities are available for storing canteen deliveries if a prisoner is not able to receive them.
- I.31** Canteen lists are rarely available in other languages and formats. Some establishments only produce the list in English, and this can have repercussions for foreign national detainees who do not speak English. Those prisoners who have difficulty reading and writing may also struggle to understand the list. While some inspections have noted that the list is available in a range of languages and in a pictorial format, it is not yet general practice to use the alternative formats in all prisons. Prisoners who are unable to read the canteen list may either depend on other prisoners to assist them, and so place themselves at risk of bullying by making their purchases known, or go without canteen items.

#### Range of products

- I.32** There are roughly 1,000 products on the NPL; the list features a wide range of goods from food such as fresh fruit, snacks and tinned produce to items such as tobacco, greetings cards and stamps, which are all purchased by DHL in large quantities. Individual prisons select 375 items from the NPL list to form a local product list (LPL) of canteen items that can be ordered.
- I.33** The range of items becomes more important when prisoners have facilities to cook for themselves, as is the case in some establishments which hold longer sentenced prisoners, or open prisons where prisoners are preparing for release. In these establishments it is important to ensure that the LPL reflects the needs of the population and contains a suitable range of fresh produce and frozen items if prisoners have access to suitable food storage facilities.
- I.34** We expect there to be regular consultation with prisoners to find out what items they would like on the LPL, to ensure that the prison is meeting the needs of the diverse population it holds. The consultation process should involve the appointment of prisoner representatives who speak to other prisoners on the wing and pass on their views at meetings, ensuring that popular items remain on the list and that less popular items can be replaced. Overall, fewer than half of prisoners in our survey (47%) felt that the canteen had a wide enough range of goods to meet their needs. They were often dissatisfied with the food options available and referred to it as a 'sweet shop' due to the lack of healthy options they could buy. Although all prisons should have a consultation process, prisoner representatives do not always reflect the prison population and the views of minority groups are not always expressed. For example, in our survey 35% of prisoners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 51% of white prisoners, felt that the shop sold a wide enough range of goods to meet their needs.

*'They do not cater properly for my needs as a black man. I need things to keep my hair in good condition and I just can't get it.'*

- I.35** Muslim prisoners also expressed dissatisfaction with the canteen list, with 35% in our survey, compared with 49% of non-Muslim prisoners, saying that it met their needs. This dissatisfaction often relates to the type of food available. For those Muslim prisoners who have access to self-catering facilities, it is important that the canteen list meets their needs.

*'Not enough Halal or kosher meat products.'*

- I.36** While local lists may include religious items such as prayer mats and Muslim gowns, these are expensive and require a large proportion of a prisoner's weekly wage.
- I.37** As with other minority groups, foreign national prisoners report less favourably about the provision of goods from the canteen. In our survey 42% of foreign national prisoners, compared with 47% of British prisoners, reported that the canteen met their needs. The canteen and catalogue order services should provide a suitable range of products for the various nationalities within the prison.
- '[There is a] lack of items that would help me to remember my national identity – foreign national food supplies, magazines, CDs, DVDs and books.'*
- I.38** Some prisons try to alleviate this by including specialist retailers on their catalogue list, allowing foreign national prisoners to buy cultural items. However, catalogue orders incur a delivery charge that the canteen does not. In view of the restrictions on sending items into prison, catalogues are the main method for prisoners to access religious and cultural items.
- I.39** Although women's prisons pick their LPL from the same national list as other establishments, the NPL contains a range of items to meet women's specific needs. When asked if the prison shop sold a wide enough range of goods to meet their needs, there was no significant difference between female and male prisoners' responses.

#### Canteen prices

- I.40** Prices of products on the NPL are set nationally and are designed to be in line with manufacturers' recommended retail price (MRRP).<sup>17</sup> Table 2 shows the difference in pricing between three high street supermarkets and the NPL.

**Table 2: Price comparison of NPL items<sup>18</sup>**

Item	NPL	Supermarket 1	Supermarket 2	Supermarket 3
Crunchy Nut Cornflakes (375g)	£2.55	£2.69 (500g)	£2.68 (500g)	£2.50 (500g)
UHT milk – semi-skim(500g)	£0.59	£0.54	£0.50	£0.50
Economy orange squash (1ltr)	£0.70	£0.89*	£0.89*	£1.00*
Bourbon biscuits (400g)	£1.00	£0.43	£0.40 (300g)	£0.25 (200g)
Tuna chunks in brine (185g)	£1.35	£0.74	£0.62	£0.90
Instant noodles (beef)	£0.35	£0.45	£0.30	£0.20
Economy ketchup (470g)	£0.69	£0.55 (1kg)	£0.36	£0.35
Mars bar	£0.59	£0.60	£0.60	£0.60
Kenco pouch (100g)	£3.29	£4.35 (150g)	£4.39 (150g)	£4.25 (150g)
Coffee pouch (70g)	£1.19	£0.50 (100g)	£0.47 (100g)	£0.60 (100g)
Yorkshire tea bags (40)	£1.39	£2.34 (80)	£2.00 (80)	£2.50 (80)
Economy tea bags (80)	£0.69	£0.20 (40)	£0.34	£0.20 (40)
Head and Shoulders shampoo (250ml)	£2.79	£2.99	£2.79	£3.00
Dove soap	£0.89	£1.50 (2)	£1.50 (2)	£1.50 (2)
Aquafresh toothpaste (125ml)	£2.03	£1.00 (100ml)	£0.74 (75ml)	£1.00 (75ml)
Economy shower gel (400ml)	£1.00	£0.40 (300ml)	£1.00	£0.20 (300ml)
Nivea Crème (50ml)	£1.95	£1.40	£0.99	£1.75
Amber Leaf tobacco (25g)	£8.57	£8.58	£8.58	£8.48
Rizla papers green	£0.25	£0.26	£0.26	£0.27

\*Double concentrate 750ml

<sup>17</sup> PSI 53/2011

<sup>18</sup> Prices obtained on 20 May 2015. Unless the product brand is stated, the cheapest equivalent of each item available for purchase has been listed. When an item is in promotion, the non-promotion price has been stated. Prices were obtained from [www.mysupermarket.co.uk](http://www.mysupermarket.co.uk).

- I.41** While the prices of branded items on the NPL are comparable to supermarkets, the NPL does not include the offers or price drops that would regularly be seen in supermarkets such as 'buy one, get one free'. In addition, supermarket economy products are cheaper than the economy version on the NPL and the economy products are also not always available on the prison's local list, so prisoners are restricted to branded items, reducing how much they can purchase. Prisoners do not have the option to 'shop around'.
- I.42** Canteen and telephone prices should also be considered in relation to prisoner wages. The minimum rate of pay for employed prisoners and private cash limits have not changed since 1992 and 2008 respectively; in contrast canteen prices can be changed on a monthly basis. Prisoners often report to us that they struggle to be able to afford items from the canteen on their prison wages:

*'Difficult to afford anything.'*

*'The canteen goes up, but pay doesn't.'*

*'Burn [tobacco] costs £8.08, wages are £9.'*

### Catalogue

- I.43** Clothing is an important part of someone's time in prison and property such as clothing can only be sent into the prison during the first 28 days of a person's sentence. It is therefore likely that at some point during their sentence a prisoner will need to purchase clothing. This is especially the case for those prisoners serving long sentences or who are nearing the end of their sentence and have begun working in the community.
- I.44** While not included on the canteen list, prisoners can purchase clothes, as well as other items like DVDs or CDs, through catalogues such as Amazon or Argos. They can be bought in a similar way to items from the canteen, by filling in an order form and waiting for the order to be delivered. These orders generally include an administration fee (covering processing and delivery costs) of between 50p and £1; this is in addition to the postage and packing of the item, and is a charge for the administrative costs of the prison. A small number of prisons do not charge an administration fee.

### Supporting resettlement work

- I.45** A large number of prisoners – nearly 20% – reported entering prison with money problems. It is important that prisoners are provided with opportunities to improve their financial management skills and manage any debts they may have on entering prison, especially if the debt will continue to grow while the prisoner is in jail.
- I.46** The support for these prisoners varied across establishments. While most prisons offered some debt support, inspections of HMP Exeter (2013) and HMP Cardiff (2013) found that no support was provided. However, there was some effective work at other inspected establishments; for example, work by Shelter at HMP Kennet (2013) resulted in £17,000 of debt being written off and a further £53,000 of debt being frozen.
- I.47** Financial advice is a crucial resettlement pathway as many prisoners enter prison without a bank account or with considerable debt. Without a bank account, newly released prisoners are reliant on cash-in-hand work and are not able to claim benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance. Furthermore, opening a bank account once released from prison may be difficult for some, especially if they do not have a photo ID. Schemes to help prisoners open bank accounts while in prison are important and most prisons now offer support to do so, although this is reliant on staff highlighting this service to prisoners who may need it.

- I.48** Open prisons have an important role in supporting successful resettlement on release, as they provide prisoners with the chance to work outside a prison, have town visits, and have extended contact with family outside the prison. Prisoners must cover their transport costs to wherever they will be spending their day on release and, due to the often remote location of open prisons, this can be expensive. Inspections found some prisoners did not take up day release opportunities or had limited opportunities to benefit from the experience because they could not afford to do so. The Criminal Justice Joint Inspection thematic exploring the experiences of life sentenced prisoners<sup>19</sup> found that it was not unusual for prisoners to decline the opportunity of town visits due to lack of funds.
- I.49** Any money that a prisoner does not spend during their time in custody is given to them in cash when they leave prison or, if they have one, transferred to their bank account. Prisoners can apply for a discharge grant of £46 and should receive assistance with claiming benefits while they look for work or education opportunities.

## Conclusion

- I.50** Prisoner pay and purchases are always likely to be controversial issues. Prison is not a normal environment and the normal processes of establishing pay and the cost of living do not apply. The state is responsible for providing prisoners with the basic necessities of life and it is right that prisoners who are able to should be expected to earn the income needed to purchase items beyond this. This is important in preparing prisoners to take on the responsibilities of independent living after release, and the fairness and efficiency in which the systems are administered helps to establish safe and stable regimes.
- I.51** There are a number of issues identified in this paper that need to be addressed at a local level, including the provision of canteen for new arrivals and efforts to combat debt-related bullying. However, some important issues need to be addressed nationally.
- I.52** We recommend:
- i. There should be a review of prisoner pay and money in possession rates, which have not changed since 1992 and 2008 respectively.
  - ii. Allowances for older prisoners and others who are unable to work should be reviewed and should provide sufficient income to cover new TV rent charges and other reasonable basic items.
  - iii. Pay should be linked to performance and effort in work, education or training and not disincentivise education or offender behaviour work.
  - iv. Prisoners should not be charged an administration fee for catalogue orders.
  - v. National and international charges for telephone calls from prisons should be reviewed to achieve equivalence with similar charges in the community.

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<sup>19</sup> Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2013) *Life sentence prisoners: A Joint Inspection by HMI Probation and HMI Prisons*.

# Acknowledgements

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