

A guide to help with your Parole Review

Information for prisoners

Easy Read version



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Help with this leaflet

Some of the words used in the leaflet are in **bold** type.

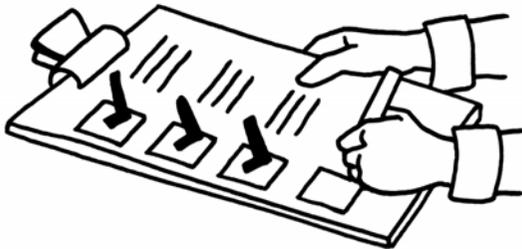
We have explained what these words mean at the end of this leaflet in the 'Glossary' section.



This leaflet will help you prepare for your **parole review**.



If you need help with the things in this leaflet you should ask somebody in the prison to help you.



It explains what will happen.



You can ask your offender supervisor, offender manager, a prison officer, the prison chaplain or a prison visitor.

Help with your parole review



You can ask a **legal representative** for help with your parole review.

The prison will have a list of legal representatives who you can contact.

You can ask a member of staff in the prison to show you the contact list.



If you cannot afford to pay for this help you can apply for **legal aid**.

In most cases you should be able to get legal aid for your parole review.

This means you will get a legal representative for free who will be able to help you.



Some people will not be able to get legal aid because of their type of parole review.

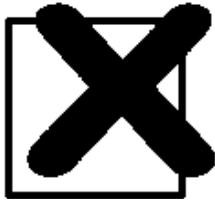
You should check with a legal representative or the Prisoners' Advice Service if you can get legal aid.



If you cannot get a legal representative you can ask a friend or someone else you know to help you with your parole review.



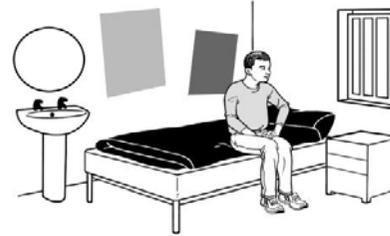
The person who is helping you with your parole review is called your **representative**.



There are some people who cannot be your representative.



You cannot be represented by someone if they are being kept under the Mental Health Act or if they might be kept under the Act soon.



You cannot be represented by someone if they are in prison or if they have left prison but are still on licence.



You cannot be represented by someone if they have an 'unspent' offence.

This is when someone must admit to having a criminal conviction if they are asked. It means not enough time has passed for a person to be able to keep their criminal convictions a secret.



You can contact the Prisoners' Advice Service for free help and advice.

Telephone: **0845 430 8923**
(Only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday)

Write:
Prisoners' Advice Service
PO Box 46199
London
EC1M 4XA

Email:
advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk



You can contact the Parole Board and ask them if you have a question about your parole review.

Telephone: **020 3334 4402**

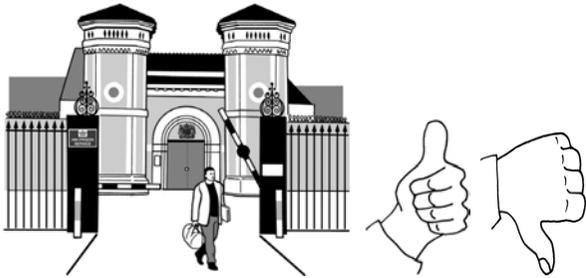
Write:
Parole Board for England and Wales
52 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AJ

Email:
info@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk

What is the Parole Board

the
**Parole
Board**

working with others
to protect the public



The **Parole Board** is the organisation that will do your parole review.

A parole review will look at if you still need to be kept in prison and what type of prison you should be kept in.



Sometimes your parole review will be done by one person.



Sometimes there may be two or three people doing your parole review.

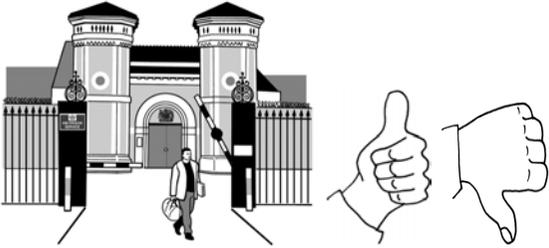


These people are called the **panel**.

One person is in charge and they are called the **chair**.

What the Parole Board does

The Parole Board does different things:



The Parole Board will talk about if someone is ready to be released from prison.

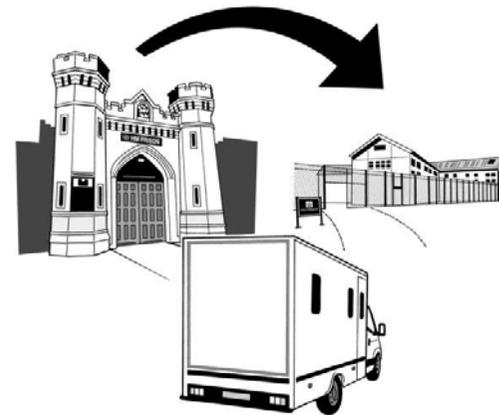
They will make the final decision about this.



The Parole Board will talk about if someone is ready to be moved to an **open prison**.

They can only recommend that this should happen.

The Ministry of Justice makes the final decision.



The Parole Board will talk about if someone is ready to be moved back into an open prison.

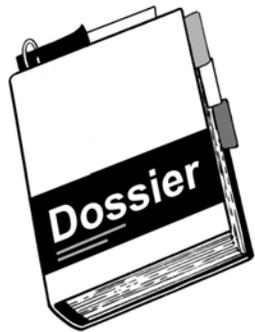
They can only recommend that this should happen.

The Ministry of Justice will make the final decision.

How the Parole Board works



The Parole Board decide about your case by looking at written evidence about you.

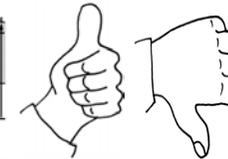


This information is called the dossier.



A Parole Board member will look at all the information they have been given in the dossier.

This stage of the case is called **Member Case Assessment (MCA)**.



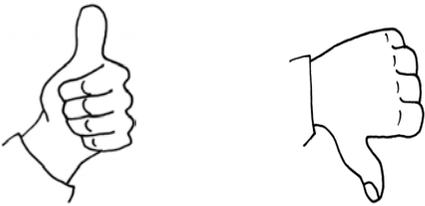
They can make the decision about your case after reading the file.

This is known as a **preliminary decision** on the papers.

This will be sent to you.



You should ask a member of the prison staff or a friend if you need help to read the letter or write back.



You will have time to read the preliminary decision.

You can decide whether to accept it or ask for an **oral hearing**.



If you want an oral hearing you must write to the Parole Board and say why.

You will need to do this within 28 days.



Sometimes the Parole Board will say no to an oral hearing.

This means the preliminary decision is final.



You can ask for advice from a legal representative about this.



You will have an oral hearing if you have asked for one and the Parole Board have said yes.



If the Parole Board don't write a preliminary decision they will say that you need an oral hearing to listen to more information.

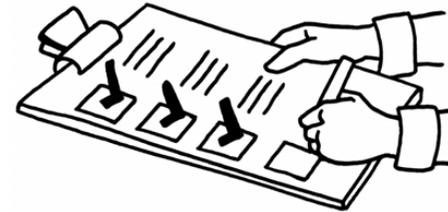


This is because they want to meet you to talk about your case.



They may want to talk to other people about your case. These other people are called **witnesses**.

This will give them more information and evidence to make their decision.



The Parole Board will issue instructions about the oral hearing. These are called **Directions**.

If you are having an oral hearing you should read "Preparing for your Parole Oral Hearing" guide.

The things that happen for a parole review

Here is a list of the main things that can happen for a parole review of your case.



You will get a letter from the Parole Board.



It tells you they will look at your case.

If you need help to read this you should ask a member of prison staff.



Your parole review can take up to 6 months before a decision is made.

Some parole reviews happen more quickly and some will take longer.



You will be given a **Prisoner Reply form** with your letter.

This is a form you need to send back as soon as possible. This shows you got their letter.



You can ask a member of prison staff to help you fill the form out.

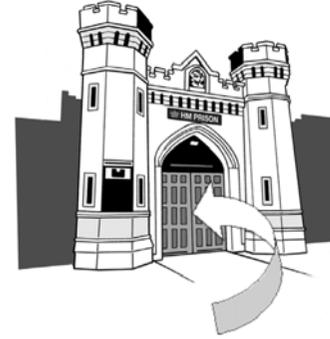


This form is where you tell them if you want to have an oral hearing.

You should say why you want an oral hearing.

You should let the Parole Board know if you have a legal representative.

You should let the Parole Board know if someone else is helping you with your parole review if you cannot get legal aid.

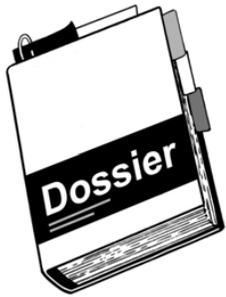


If you have been **recalled** to prison the Parole Board must review your case more quickly.

The Parole Board will not have time to send you a letter.



If you have been recalled to prison you should contact a legal representative as soon as possible.



The Prison you are at collects lots of information about you and puts it in a file called the dossier.

The prison give this to the Parole Board.



You must be given the dossier about you.

If you need help to read your dossier you can ask your representative or a member of staff at the prison.

Information that will go into your dossier for your parole review is listed below



Reports written by prison and probation staff.



Reports by other staff who have worked with you. This could be a report from a psychologist or prison chaplain.



Details of your offence and previous offences.



Things the judge said when you were sentenced.



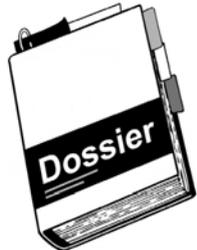
Other things like healthcare reports can be included.



If you have a legal representative they will help with your representations.



You can send written information to the Parole Board which will go into the dossier.



It should be things that will help your case.

These are called **Representations.**

If you cannot get a legal representative you can ask a friend or someone else you know to help you with your representations.

The type of things you can write in your representations



You should say if you have any problems with reading or writing and if you find it difficult understanding or communicating.



Write down the good things you have done in prison.

This could be courses you have done, things that show you can be trusted and that you have behaved well.



You should say why you think you are ready to be released or moved to an open prison.



You can say what you think about the information in the dossier about you.

If you think some information is wrong you should say why you think this is.



You can show how you are less of a **risk**. This means that you will be well behaved and will not cause serious harm to anyone.



You can explain if your dossier is missing important information.

Do you want an oral hearing?



You can say why you think an oral hearing is needed for your case.

You should write this in your representations.

You can ask for certain people to attend who can give the Parole Board more information about you. These people will be known as witnesses.



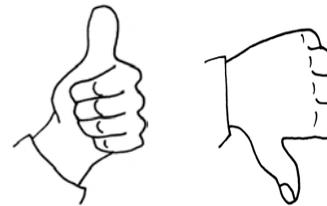
You can say if you want the witnesses to be in the room when your parole review is happening.



Sometimes witnesses can give information about you over the telephone or through a TV screen on a **videolink**. They will not be in the room if they do this.



You can say how many Parole Board people you think are needed on the panel (1, 2 or 3 people).



The Parole Board will read your representations and will make the final decisions on who will attend an oral hearing.

The information that the Parole Board will be looking for to help them make their decision



The Parole Board will think about all the information in the dossier.



The main thing the Parole Board think about is risk.

This means if people will be harmed if you are released or moved to an open prison.



The Parole Board will think about the crimes that you have done in the past.



The Parole Board will want to know if you understand how your actions affected the **victims** of your crimes.



The Parole Board will think about the things the judge said when you were sentenced.



The Parole Board will think about what good changes you have made to yourself in prison.



The Parole Board will think about the things you did in prison, such as how you behaved.



The Parole Board will want to know what help and support you would have if you were released from prison.



The Parole Board will want to know if you have any medical or mental health problems.



There might be other things the Parole Board will want to know that will be helpful to them.

The things that make someone suitable for release from prison



When it is thought that you are not a threat to the public.

This means the public do not need to be protected from your behaviour.



If you understand your **licence conditions** and if you will be able to stick to them.



If there are good plans for where you will live and what you will do if you are let out of prison.



If there are good plans for supporting you and making sure that you stay out of trouble.

The things that make someone suitable to be in an open prison



The Parole Board will talk about how much risk they think you have.

This means if the public still need to be protected from your behaviour if you are on **temporary release** from the prison.



If you will be able to stick to your licence conditions if you are on temporary release from prison.



This means things like staying away from certain places or people.



You will not run away from the open prison and will return back to it after temporary release.



They will talk about the benefits of you being in an open prison.

They might talk about if you need to get used to being in the community before you can be released from prison.

They might talk about if you can get work experience or training.

What to do if you need to complain



If you think anything was not done fairly you can complain.



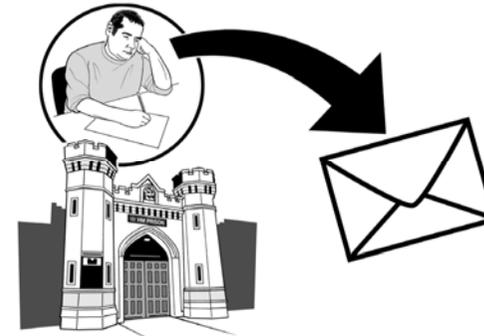
You or your legal representative should write a letter explaining why you think the hearing was unfair.

The Parole Board will decide whether you need to have another hearing.



You can say if you think the hearing was unfair.

You should ask for advice from a legal representative about this.



You will need to send the letter to:

The Complaints Officer
Parole Board for
England and Wales
52 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AJ

Glossary

Here is a list of special words about parole

Chair	The person on the panel who is in charge.
Directions	<p>These are the instructions the Parole Board say need to happen to make sure the hearing is fair.</p> <p>These directions may include a list of which witnesses should be at the hearing, or any other information that the Parole Board may want to see.</p>
Dossier	This is the information about you that the Parole Board will look at.
Legal aid	Free financial support to help you pay for a legal representative.
Legal representative	Someone who is legally qualified and can help you with your parole review.
Licence conditions	The rules and conditions you have agreed to follow if you are released from prison. If you break any of these conditions you might be sent back to prison.

Member Case Assessment (MCA)	This is the way the Parole Board first looks at a case on the papers to decide if you can have parole
Open prison	A prison that gives you more freedom and sometimes allows you to spend time out of the prison.
Oral Hearing	<p>This is when the Parole Board meets the prisoner to talk about the case before they make their decision.</p> <p>It means they can get more information and evidence from you and other people.</p>
Panel	The people from the Parole Board who will make a decision about your case. The panel could be one person, two people or three people.
Parole Board	The people who will do your parole review and the staff that work in the Parole Board office.
Parole Review	This is when the Parole Board decides if someone is suitable to be released from prison on licence or transferred to an open prison.

Preliminary decision	This is when the Parole Board have looked at all the written information and decide that the person should stay in their current prison. They write to the person to let them know.
Prisoner reply form	This is a form that will be sent to you with an initial notification. You will have to complete this form and send it back to the Parole Board. This tells them you know about your parole review.
Recalled	If you were released from prison but have now been put back into prison whilst you were on licence.
Representations	This is information the prisoner sends to the Parole Board for them to look at. It is information that might help their case.
Representative	Someone who is helping you with your parole review. If they are not legally qualified they are called your representative. Some people cannot be your representative.

Risk	This is how much harm you might cause to people if you were released from prison.
Temporary release	If you are let out of prison for a few hours or a day. You will have to return to prison when you are told to do so.
Victims	The person or persons who have been harmed or affected by your crime.
Videolink	This is where people can talk to you and the panel if they are not in the room. A television screen is used so that you can see the person speaking, and they can see you.
Witnesses	These are other people that will say things about you at an oral hearing.

This leaflet was developed with the support of the 'Working for Justice' group. This group is comprised of people with learning disabilities who have been suspects, defendants, offenders and prisoners. It is jointly managed by KeyRing Living Support Networks and the Prison Reform Trust.