



Welcome to Session 2: Experience

The Prisons Awareness Course

Updated Jan 22

The Welcome Directory. Helping faith communities welcome and support people leaving prison



Aims & Objectives

For faith communities worshipping outside the prison gates to have the opportunity to meet faith community members who have experience of worshipping within the prison walls, to get to know one another and celebrate their respective faith communities.

The aims of this session are to:

- Understand the role of Prison Chaplains through the multi-faith chaplaincy team as well as Community Chaplains
- Consider faith in prison through hearing from experience
- Recognise the similarities in the importance of our faiths throughout our own personal stories and diverse experiences
- Consider the challenges of release and reintegration through hearing from experience
- Consider some of the ways to be part of the solution
- Understand that we all have strengths and talents which can be invested in our faith community, regardless of our background
- Understand that we all have hopes and dreams for our lives





Overview

- Welcome & Introductions
- Faith in Prison
- Faith Outside the Gates
- Conversations & Sharing Experiences
 - Celebrating our Faith Communities
 - Experience Q&A
 - Finding a New Faith Community upon Release
 - Experience Q&A
 - Giving Back
- Next Steps & Questions





Faith In Prison

The Role of Prison Chaplains

In order for a prison to be a **functioning legal entity**, according to the **1952 Prison Act**, it needs a **governor**, a **chaplain** and a **medical officer**.

The freedom to worship in prison is a **statutory requirement** laid down in law and the following rights are afforded to prisoners:

- A chaplain must see each new reception as soon as possible after they are received into prison.
- Prisoners must have the opportunity for corporate worship or meditation for one hour per week.
- Prisoners located in Segregation Units or Healthcare Units must have the opportunity for corporate worship or meditation for one hour per week and be visited everyday.
- Recognised religious feasts, fasts and festivals should be observed. There are exceptions to these rules. However, opportunities to worship or meditate should be the norm for the majority of prisoners for most of the time.

There are different **categories of prison**: cat A to D

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Faith Outside the Gates

The Role of Community Chaplains

- **Aim-** to work alongside prisoners, prison leavers and their families, offering mentoring and holistic support within prison, through the gates and out in the community. They work with each person as an individual, respecting their needs and goals
- **Mentors-** work with mentees in a variety of ways including:
 - signposting mentees to resources and advocating on their behalf,
 - supporting progress and listening to mentees' concerns,
 - encouraging pro-social attitudes and behaviour,
 - supporting family contact
 - demonstrating hope and optimism
- **Process-** the move away from crime is more of a process than an event (or series of events). Need to deliver support that is relationship based, built on people's strengths and enables them to define themselves in positive ways by dropping the unhelpful labels they may have acquired.
- **Volunteers-** work often relies on volunteers who give their time to support those who are seeking to make a fresh start after leaving prison.



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Celebrating our Faith Communities



Introduce yourselves to one another.

Listen to the experiences of the guest then discuss...

Talking points:

- From what you've heard about the experiences shared, **is there anything that has struck you?**
- Describe a time when you feel **your faith/ beliefs has helped you** deal with a challenging situation in life.
- Describe **how you are able to support others** in your faith community or **how you have been helped** by others in your faith community.



Experience

First day of release...



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Finding a New Faith Community upon Release



Listen to the experiences of the guest then discuss...

Talking points:

- **From what you've heard, what might you/ your faith community do differently** to be part of the solution to help prison leavers transition better?
- **Think of faith communities you know.** Consider both the practicalities of how that community meets (e.g. time, location), what they do (e.g. faith practices) and the attitudes there. **What barriers can you recognise?**

Experience

Reintegration...



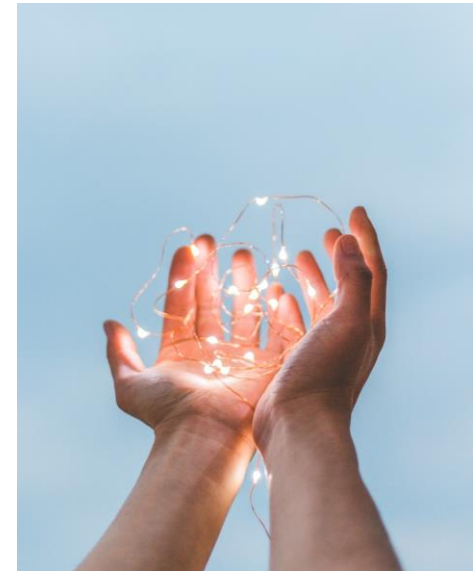
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Giving Back



Talking points:

- In what ways are you able to **get involved in your faith community?**
- If you could pick one thing, **what would you say your strength/ talent is?** Have you been able to **put this into practice** / invest this in your faith community to 'give back'? How does it **make you feel?**
- Why do you think it is **important to provide people with opportunities to 'give back'** into faith communities, as well as being supported by them?



Important question: **What can your faith community do to enable people who have left prison to contribute into the life of your community?**



Summary

- Informative, challenging, opportunity to share
- Gain a different perspective on prison life
- Understand the importance of faith in prison
- Understanding of faith and beliefs of Chaplains and Prisoners
- Next session- Action!



Questions



Debrief



Session Aim:

For faith communities worshipping outside the prison gates to have the opportunity to meet faith community members who have experience of worshipping within the prison walls, to get to know one another and celebrate their respective faith communities.

