

NEW ARRANGEMENTS TO EASE TRANSFER OF PRISONERS COME INTO EFFECT

Arrangements to ease the transfer of prisoners between United Kingdom jurisdictions come into effect today.

The new arrangements will facilitate the transfer of prisoners with close family ties in other jurisdictions.

Welcoming the changes the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"In keeping with the Government's commitment towards human rights, we fully recognise the importance of facilitating contact between prisoners and their families. To this end the provisions implemented today will enhance previous arrangements for the inter-jurisdictional transfer of prisoners.

"In particular, prisoners previously unable to be permanently transferred to Northern Ireland because of differing release arrangements may now expect to be able to serve out their sentences in Northern Ireland and to benefit from the regime applying to all other prisoners held there. This will include both loyalist and republican prisoners. This will mark a significant enhancement of the ability of prisoners held in Northern Ireland to maintain close contact with their families."

Note to Editors

Under the new arrangements transfers between England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man will take place on either an unrestricted or a restricted basis.

Transfers made on a restricted basis will be subject to conditions which will ensure that the integrity of the sentence imposed by the Court is maintained on transfer. Matters relating to release on licence, automatic release, supervision and recall will remain with the sentencing jurisdiction. However, a prisoner transferred on a restricted basis will normally be subject for all other purposes to the rules and procedures applying to the receiving country including those relating to categorisation and temporary release.

Unrestricted transfers will not be subject to any conditions.

The new legislation also provides, for the first time, for the transfer between jurisdictions of remand prisoners.

The Schedule also contains new provisions relating to the transfer between jurisdictions of post release supervision arrangements.

Provisions contained in Schedule 1 to the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 replace provisions in the 1961 Criminal Justice Act under which transfers have previously been conducted.

The change in legislation follows a recommendation by an inter departmental working group, which was accepted by the then Government and given effect in the Crime (Sentences) Act which was the first convenient opportunity to make the necessary changes.