



**Vegan Prisoners Support Group**  
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**BASIC GUIDE FOR VEGAN PRISONERS**  
**Revised October 2002**

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**POLICE STATIONS**

**1.1** The provision of clothing, toiletries and food while being held in custody varies from police station to police station.

Often police stations will allow clothes, vegan toiletries, books and newspapers to be brought in.

Often some police stations will allow pre-packaged vegan food to be accepted. This often is only agreed to after being contacted by the Vegan Prisoners Support Group [VPSG] Helpline on 020 82 92 83 25.

Our research June 2002 shows that the only microwavable food held at police stations is Pilau Rice and Vegetable Chilli [Note White and Wild Rice is not suitable for vegans as it possibly contains bone char].

Disposable toothbrushes issued at police stations are unlikely to be suitable for vegans. The same applies to the soap and shampoo.

**2.0 ATTENDING COURT**

**2.1. Going Prepared for Custodial Sentence or Possible Period of Remand**

At this stage the VPSG should have been contacted so they can ensure that a Case Worker is available in the office to contact the prison in the eventuality of a custodial sentence or period of remand being given, in order to give the appropriate prison advice on the requirements of vegans regarding vegan food/toiletries.

At each court attendance you should go prepared to receive a custodial sentence as court procedures involving different cases are constantly changing. For example, you may be told that a case will be heard over a five day period, only for it to conclude on day 1. For this reason you should take with you each day items that will be of use to you in prison; provided of course you are on bail. The following is a list of some essential and non essential items.

**2.2. Essential Items**

a) Money [you will be allowed to spend £10 a week minimum of private cash on items such as phonecards, toiletries, food, stamps, tobacco, etc].

b) Writing material: paper, envelopes, clear see through biro and stamps.

c) Clothing and footwear: many prisons now only allow you to keep the footwear you arrive with. Additional footwear may need to be purchased by saving the £10 a week private money allocation, together with any wages [about £7 per week] until you can buy footwear and clothing by mail order. For this reason you should consider taking any clothing and shoes you will need for your use, for example in the gym as well as steel capped boots for work in addition to a pair for general use. Clothing should include all items required as normally you are only allowed one wash of clothes every two weeks.

d) Reading material: you will probably have plenty of spare time the first week or two so consider taking a few books to read. You will be introduced to library facilities during your

induction period, however you will need something to occupy yourself with in the meantime.

### **2.3. Non Essential Items**

a) Radio: the prison you may arrive at may not have mains power in the cell, so a smaller radio cassette may be the best choice since you will have to purchase batteries from the canteen.

b) Tobacco: if you do smoke you should take a supply with you together with papers, filters and a lighter.

c) Toiletries: very few prisons allow toiletries to be taken in on reception; if they do they would need to be new and sealed.

#### **Note: July 2002**

At the present time the toiletry situation is being reviewed by the Prison Service and we are hopeful that shortly all basic toiletries within the Prison System will be vegan and not tested on animals.

If the prisoner so wishes, they can order from Honesty through their canteen and pay for them. If difficulties are experienced VPSG can assist in order to enforce the principle that strict ethical vegan prisoners should be offered the equal opportunity to order suitable ethical toiletries for their use.

However, initially this is processed by completing a Governors Application.

Prison issue toiletries confirmed suitable for vegans - Not tested on animals

**The Collection - Hotel Complimentaries - Liquid Soap  
Pampered Blue Ice Roll on -Chillwoods Deodorant  
Freshmint Toothpast - Jordans Personal Care**

Note: No bar soap, or shaving stock or brush at present are suitable for vegans although a source of bar soap [which can be used to shave] is being researched.

### **2.4 Food in court.**

Sometimes - when arrested - you may be held overnight at the police station and taken to Court the next day. Alternatively you may be in prison and taken to the Court for a hearing. You will be held in a cell at the Court and the question of food may arise.

Our information is that Group 4 [one of the companies used for the transportation of prisoners] do not have any vegan pre-packaged food available. However they occasionally have a pot noodle to hand. The only flavours currently suitable for vegans are 'Sweet & Sour' and 'Chicken Curry'. You are entitled to be fed and can insist that they provide you with suitable food. Your solicitor and the VPSG may be able to help you with this.

The two other companies used for transportation are Premier and Securicor. The same will apply to them as they are also responsible for your welfare whilst you are in their care.

## **3.0 ARRIVING AT THE PRISON**

### **3.1 Reception**

Once you have arrived at the prison you will be processed at reception. This will inevitably involve a period of waiting around until you are seen.

You will first be strip searched which will involve all items of clothing being removed and each item searched. At no time should all clothing be removed at once [i.e. the lower half of your clothing should be intact while they are searching the top half and vice versa].

All your property will be itemised. The items you are allowed will be handed back for you to take with you into prison, while other items will be stored for you. You will be allowed to hand stored or in possession items out on visits, providing you make an application beforehand.

You will usually be given a pack containing basic toiletries, hairbrush, flannel etc. This often contains the vegan prison-issue toiletries mentioned above, memorise them to ensure you have vegan toiletries right from the start!

### **Photograph**

Your photograph will be taken and you will then be issued with a prison number. This number will remain with you throughout your sentence whether you are on remand or convicted.

You will be asked whether you have any medical problems or are on any medication - this is the best opportunity to clearly state that you are a vegan.

### **3.2 The VPSG's role if you are detained within prison**

Once you are sentenced, or remanded the VPSG will contact the prison informing them of your arrival and advising them of your requirements. The Governor will be contacted offering a free reception pack of toiletries which once accepted will be despatched from Honesty. A fax will then be sent to the prison confirming the conversation.

The kitchens will then also be contacted and they will be offered their free Catering Information pack. A further fax will be sent to the prison confirming the conversation and the pack despatched.

Copies of all correspondence done on your behalf will be forwarded to you.

The VPSG will then offer the prison a free basic reception toiletry pack (shampoo, soap, toothpaste). Due to postal delays at weekends this may take up to one week.

Let the VPSG know as soon as it arrives. If it hasn't come within a few days contact the VPSG who can help ensure a speedy delivery.

## **4.0 PRISON LIFE**

### **4.1 Prison Kitchen**

Comprehensive recommendations regarding the storage and handling of vegan food have been submitted by VPSG to HMPS Catering Department - Corby. These recommendations are under trial at prisons at the moment and once any revisions have been made will be included into the PSO500 proper when it is next printed at the end of 2003.

We are not at liberty to include these recommendations in this pack. However, we are including some guidelines below for your guidance.

- Vegan food should not be cross contaminated with any form of animal protein at any stage of the storage/handling or serving.
- Assurances need to be obtained to ensure that uncontaminated oil is used to cook the vegan choice and items such as roast potatoes, and chips.
- It is important that a fortified brand soya milk is provided to ensure adequate supplies of calcium are received i.e. the average adult requires 700mg/day. Calcium is important in the assimilation of B12 which should be provided in the form of a yeast extract. However, Calcium requires Magnesium in order for the body to synthesis this mineral. See Information Sheet for sources of Magnesium.

A Catering Information Pack is in the process of being compiled by the VPSG which will include comprehensive nutritional information together with suggested menus. It's completion is planned for end November 2002.

### **4.2 Canteen**

Canteen sheets are issued on a weekly basis in order for prisoners to order food items/toiletries. The amount you are allowed to spend will vary from prison to prison as will the items that will be allowed.

It is useful if prisoners complete a Governors Application to enquire the availability of vegan items through the canteen.

If difficulty is experienced VPSG can assist prisoners in trying to obtain certain vegan nutritional food items/toiletries through their canteen.

Prisoners' shops/canteens should make every effort to stock food, toiletries and other items for which there is a demand from ethnic minority prisoners. These might include oils and creams for toiletry purposes, a variety of fruit produce and items such as non-Christian greeting cards. Where prisoners request items which are not stocked, prison shops can order them through a supplier. Vegan products, especially food items and toiletries, should also be available either as a stock item or by arranging for goods to be ordered for prisoners.

In general, all items for prisoners should be purchased through the prison shop. An exception to this is made when shopping for ethnic minority goods where these would not otherwise be available [see IG 72/1994].

Advice on minority diets and wholesale outlets for the purchase of ethnic minority goods may be obtained from Supply and Transport Services, who should also be able to offer advice on the supply of vegan products.

#### **Result of Research done by the VPSG June 2002**

As the majority of Inmate's Shop are run by Aramark a department was established approx. two years ago at Prison HQ to oversee them. VPSG are currently in discussion with them with their concerns that vegans are not being given equal opportunities in any shop under contract to Aramark.

As no decision has so far been reached, should your inmate's shop be run by this company, it is recommended that you seek the assistance of the VPSG.

#### **Update October 2002**

A draft report is under consideration regarding prison shops relating equal opportunity to minority groups and when complete help/advice from outside organisations will be sought the VPSG amongst them.

### **4.3 Healthcare**

You will then be taken to Healthcare and seen by a doctor. At this point make sure that it has been put on your files that you are vegan. Also remember to inform them if you need to arrange any herbal remedies. [If you are having problems in this area the VPSG may be able to help]

### **4.4 Clothing**

**Remand Prisoners:** Are allowed to keep their own clothes.

**Convicted:** Sometimes you will be allowed to keep your own clothes. Other times your own clothes will be taken from you at reception and put into your own property box [often you will be allowed to take one pair of your own shoes].

You will then be provided with prison clothes. You can however, apply via application to be given your own clothes back, but certain items may be refused for security reasons. A limited number of each item of clothing will be permitted [this varies from prison to prison].

You can have clothes and footwear brought in though you will normally have to put in an application before the visit they are brought in on.

**Future Purchase of Clothes:** New clothes/footwear can be purchased through the current catalogue used at the prison [this varies from prison to prison]. If however, the catalogue used does not contain suitable vegan items if you can source another catalogue the prison should allow you to purchase from this alternative source.

#### **4.5 Vitamins/Basic Nutrition**

Diet Sheet Records are provided by VPSG to aid with assessing the nutritional value of prison food. It is helpful to us if prisoners complete these and return them for the full 3 / 4 week menu cycle. The Diet Sheet Records may be copied by us and used in order to ensure a nutritional diet is provided. Therefore, the Grumble sheets provided should be used to contain any specific comments/problems of a more personal nature that need to be outlined in detail.

If individual prisoners feel they require extra vitamin requirements these should be requested through Healthcare. If this avenue is not feasible these should be ordered through the Canteen for your purchase. [See note in Prison Service Guidelines].

Basic Nutritional Information Relating to the Vegan Diet: See Attachment 2.

#### **4.6 VISIT**

##### **Remand**

Visits can be booked over the phone without a visiting order, and you will usually be allowed more visits than if convicted - around 3-6 a week.

##### **Convicted Prisoners**

When convicted, the prisoner is usually allowed a Reception Visit in the first couple of days after they arrive at the prison (this will depend on the individual prison). For this visit a Visiting Order (V.O.) is not required, the visitor can just book the visit over the phone.

After this your visitors will be required to be in possession of a V.O., which they use to book a visit.

Normally you should be issued with a batch of V.O.'s within a couple of days of arriving at prison. They are normally issued on a monthly basis; you may well be restricted to one hour visits as a standard prisoner. This will increase with enhanced status which is normally a two hour visit. You will get around 2-4 visits a month as a convicted prisoner.

Normally there is a restriction to three adult visitors per V.O.

**Standard Prisoner:** Your status on arriving at prison.

**Enhanced Prisoner:** This is attained by attending work or education and by general good behaviour.

**Basic Prisoner.** This is attained as a result of bad behaviour and will result in a loss of privileges. The higher your status the more privileges you get, for example more visits.

**Note:** Any behaviour in breach of prison rules will mean the reversal to standard status.

[For your information all behaviour in breach of prison rules is documented in your personal file during the whole sentence.]

#### **4.7 Courses**

Once you have seen Sentence Planning you may be required to undertake certain courses if you are on a parole sentence and these can often help towards an early release, or if on a non parole sentence they can help with the availability of tagging. If you wish to progress through the prison system in a constructive manner it is suggested that you should start to apply and enquire about completing your courses as soon as possible.

#### **4.8 Education**

Prison education could present you with a chance to enhance your academic abilities. It is also important as a way to keep your mind active.

There should be the opportunity to learn computer skills which can be an advantage on your release and also A Level Courses.

Access to Open University Courses are also a possibility with the added bonus of payment being available from one or more of the Prison Education Trust. If a second OU is undertaken the Home Office will pay.

## **5.0 DEALING WITH PROBLEMS**

### **5.1 Personal Officer**

Your Personal Officer should be your first port of call if problems arise. They are in effect the first step in any process of complaint or request you may wish to make. Your Personal Officer will also be the one to monitor your progress through your sentence and complete paperwork concerning such things as Home Detention Curfew [HDC] or Parole.

### **5.2 Request/Complaints Forms**

These forms are to be completed when other channels of complaint have failed. These [if not readily available] should be issued to you within 7 days of applying and a reply should be received within 28 days of completion.

Once your reply is received if you are not happy with the response the next step is to apply to see the Governor. Normally at this stage it will be settled amicably. If not the next step is the Ombudsman this, however, must be done within one month of receiving your final response. You can also request the Prison Ombudsman investigate your complaint if the Prison Service does not reply to you within the 6 week maximum deadline.

[Note: You can also make an application during the above process to see the Board of Visitors who may be able to assist].

### **5.3 OMBUDSMAN**

The Prison Ombudsman is an independent official responsible for considering complaints from prisoners about almost any aspect of their treatment in prison.

The Ombudsman cannot consider complaints made about outside bodies such as the police or the courts.

You must contact The Ombudsman yourself - he/she cannot consider complaints made by prisoners, families or friends.

**[For further information see Prisoners Information Book]**

## **6.0 USING THE VPSG**

### **6.1 Guidelines**

Although vegan prisoners are free to contact the VPSG they should be aware that time taken up with minor matters means that the VPSG runs less efficiently. It is suggested that each prisoner should use the establishments' channels of complaint before calling on outside help.

Initially your personal officer should be given the opportunity to sort out any vegan related problems you may be experiencing. It is recommended that you keep an accurate note of any applications, discussions and commitments in a diary so that if VPSG need to become involved so that they have the history of the situation.

It is recommended that you consider trying to build a working relationship with your Personal Officer, the S.O [Senior Officer], P.O [Principle Officer] and Governors to try to ensure that results are achieved as quickly as possible.

If you have a genuine problem you are unable to sort out through the normal channels within prison then contact:

Vegan Prisoners Support Group  
P.O.Box 194  
Enfield, Middx EN1 4YL  
Tel 020 82 92 83 25

**Also supplying them with the above mentioned diary of events.**

### **6.2 The Vegan Society**

Membership of the undermentioned society is no longer necessary in order to obtain a vegan diet so is optional.

The Vegan Society  
Donald Watson House  
7, Battle Road  
St. Leonard-on-Sea,  
East Sussex  
TN37 7AA      Tel: 01424 427393

**Attachments:** Prison Service Guidelines  
Nutritional Information  
Personal Experiences From ex-prisoners

### **Handy Addresses**

- **Ethical Wares**, Caegwyn, Temple Bar, Felinfach, Ceredigion, Wales SA8 7SA  
Tel: 01570 471155
- **Honesty Cosmetics**, Lumford Mill, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1GS  
Tel: 01629 814888
- **Vegetarian Shoes**, 12 Gardner Street, Brighton BN1 1UP  
Tel: 01273 691913
- **Vegan Stores**, 15, Chichester Drive, East Saltdean, Brighton BN2 8LD  
Tel: 01273 302979