

1. Mr Stanley
2. Mr Jackson

**USE OF IRISH LANGUAGE IN OFFICIAL BUSINESS:
DRAFT PRISONS CIRCULAR**

1. Following Ministerial decisions in relation to the wider issues of the position of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, Central Secretariat issued a guidance circular in January this year (copy attached at A).

The main features of Central Secretariat Circular 1/88 are:-

- i. personal names in Irish should be accepted for all official purposes, including correspondence and official documents;
- ii. use of the English version of place and street names in official business and records should continue;
- iii. Departments should translate letters received in Irish and reply in English.

Circular 1/88 applies to the NIO but stated that separate guidance would be issued by both the Prisons Department and the Court Service.

2. Our draft circular is attached at B. It is based on John Steele's minute of 12 October 1987 to Ronnie Spence, attached at C. Briefly it provides the following:-

- i. names used must be those that appear on the original committal warrant, whether the English or Irish version;
- ii. correspondence and petitions must be written in English;
- iii. outgoing mail must be addressed in English.

NIO(L) is conscious that we have derogated from the Central Secretariat guidance considerably and is aware that it is for purely practical, not ideological, reasons.

3. Our circular comes at an appropriate time since we have just discovered that the Maze prison has been allowing one of the inmates to receive letters from his young son in Irish. We asked for an explanation and have received a thoroughly unsatisfactory response. I will be minuting you separately on this matter.
4. I would be grateful for your approval for the draft circular attached

Claire Marson

CLAIRE MARSON

19 July 1988

DRAFT

Prison Department
Dundonald House
BELFAST

Ref: PI 568/87

CIRCULAR NO /

To all Governors:
Copy to Principal, Prison Service College

USE OF IRISH LANGUAGE IN OFFICIAL BUSINESS

1. The purpose of this circular is to ensure that Governors are aware of the policy regarding the use of the Irish Language in relation to prison issues.

Personal Names

2. It is Government policy to respect the wishes of any individual who has indicated a desire to be known by a personal name in the Irish Language. However, within the prisons, in order to avoid confusion, prisoners must be referred to and addressed by the version of their name which appears on their original committal warrant.
3. Notwithstanding this, prison records should include a reference to the Irish version of a name where it is used by the prisoner, even though it does not appear on the inmate's committal warrant.
4. When a letter arrives addressed to a prisoner using the Irish version of the inmate's name - when this is not the name on the committal warrant - providing it is possible to identify the prisoner (eg by the prison number) the letter should be passed to the addressee.

5. Replies to letters from a third party (eg a solicitor) in which prisoners are referred to by the Irish version of their name - when this is not the name on the committal warrant - should identify the prisoner in the heading by the name on the warrant followed by the Irish name in brackets; subsequent references to the prisoner by name in the response should be that which appears on the warrant. Reference should be made in the letter to the necessity of using the name on the committal warrant for identification purposes.

Correspondence

6. In accordance with Standing Orders Section 5 Subsection B Order 26 prisoners should correspond in English unless they are unable to do so, in which case alternative arrangements will be made in consultation with Headquarters, Regimes Division.

Petitions

7. Petitions must be written in English to facilitate Governors commenting on them and Headquarters responding to them as quickly as possible. If a prisoner writes the Irish version of his name at the top of his petition - but this is not the version which appears on his committal warrant - the prison must ensure the inmate's prison number and name as it appears on the committal warrant, is entered on the front page of the petition.

Addresses

8. Outgoing correspondence from prisoners should be addressed in English since departures from this practice could cause considerable difficulties. Outgoing envelopes addressed with the Irish version of place and street names should be returned to the prisoner with a request for the correspondence to be re-addressed.

9. Any enquiries regarding this circular should be directed to Ms C Marson on extension 427.

S C JACKSON
Director of Prison Regimes

July 1988