

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / 01.04.20

This is the Ministry of Justice's regular stakeholder communications update service. This is intended to signpost the latest Covid-19 guidance and central government updates.

We would find it helpful to know about your own communications plans and any intel that will help inform our communications moving forwards. If you know an organisation which should be added to the list, please do get in touch at samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk or thomas.cracknell@justice.gov.uk.

Please find today's update below.

- We have robust and flexible plans to ensure we can continue to deliver key services across the justice system.
- A network of priority courts will remain open during the coronavirus pandemic to make sure the justice system continues to operate effectively.
- Pregnant women in custody who do not pose a high risk of harm to the public will be temporarily released from prison within days to protect them and their unborn children from coronavirus.

HMPPS

Pregnant prisoners and prisoners in Mother and Baby Units are to be temporarily released from custody to protect them from coronavirus. Prison governors will now be able to grant their release on temporary licence once they pass a risk assessment and suitable accommodation for the women has been identified. In addition, as of 31 March 2020, transfers within the prison estate are limited to just exceptional cases. Read the full announcement here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pregnant-prisoners-to-be-temporarily-released-from-custody>

Q&A for friends and families of prisoners. A Q&A has been published on the GOV.UK prisons and coronavirus page, which answers some of the questions asked most frequently on social media and via helplines. The document will continue to be regularly updated. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-qa-for-friends-and-family-of-prisoners>

Prisons and probation services have implemented significant changes to comply with the Government's social distancing rules and to protect staff and service users. The service has been working closely with public health experts, as well as criminal justice partners, to ensure that robust contingency plans are in place and immediate action can be taken wherever cases are identified. The following page will continue to be updated when new advice is available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-and-prisons>

As of 17:00 on TUESDAY 31 MARCH:

- 69 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 25 prisons;
- 14 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 8 prisons;
- 4 Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) staff have tested positive for COVID-19.

Further updates with the latest figures may be released later this evening to the media and will be included here the following day for information, so please do bear with us if they are superseded during the day.

HMCTS

During this unprecedented public health emergency, we are adjusting practices and taking steps to minimise the risk to the judiciary, court staff and users. Any changes to individual hearings will be communicated directly to those affected in the usual way, by email and/or phone. The following page will continue to be updated when new advice is available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

HMCTS is issuing a regular e-mail alert with an operational summary. See the latest alert and subscribe here: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHMCTS/bulletins/2837796>

HMCTS maintain a daily operational summary service on courts and tribunals from Monday to Friday during the Coronavirus outbreak. HMCTS aim to update this page daily by 9am: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-daily-operational-summary-on-courts-and-tribunals-during-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Victims and witnesses

Victim and witness support services. The Ministry of Justice has compiled information on accessing victim and witness support services during Covid-19. An overview of specialist helplines is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-victim-and-witness-services>

Latest general guidance

- The new Business Support campaign for Covid-19: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>
- Major new measures to protect people at highest risk from Coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-measures-to-protect-people-at-highest-risk-from-coronavirus>
- Guidance for businesses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>
- Home isolation / 'stay at home' guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>
- Social distancing / vulnerable people: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Please continue to refer to [GOV.UK/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the latest information on the situation in the UK and the Government's response. For information about the illness and symptoms visit [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

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