

# Ministry of Justice

## Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / 03.04.20

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 encourage organisations to share these updates with your wider networks to ensure a wide circulation of important communications. For monitoring and evaluation purposes, we'd gratefully receive information on who you are sharing this with.**

We would also find it helpful to know about your own communications plans and any intel that will help inform our communications moving forwards. Please do get in touch at [samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk) or [thomas.cracknell@justice.gov.uk](mailto: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.

### **Legal Aid Agency**

**NEW: The Legal Aid Agency has unveiled a support package for civil, family and criminal legal aid practitioners to ensure access to justice during the coronavirus outbreak.** The initiatives will make hardship payments easier to access and pause some debt repayments to the LAA. Read the full announcement here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/support-package-for-legal-providers-will-ensure-access-to-justice-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

### **HMCTS**

**NEW: Updated guidance on cleanliness in courts and tribunals.** HMCTS has published updated information to the hygiene and sanitisation page on GOV.UK, highlighting the introduction of more than 150 extra cleaning staff to carry out additional cleaning to buildings that are open to the public. Read the full guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-court-and-tribunal-buildings-safe-secure-and-clean#hygiene-and-cleaning-standards>

**NEW: Updated guidance on applying for a domestic violence injunction as an unrepresented applicant during the coronavirus outbreak.** It explains the arrangements in place during the coronavirus pandemic, including making sure that a court is open before sending an application and that hearings can take place by remote means whenever possible. Read the full guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/applying-for-a-domestic-violence-family-law-act-injunction-for-unrepresented-applicants>

*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 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>*

## **HMPPS**

*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 THURSDAY 2 APRIL:*

- *88 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 29 prisons;*
- *15 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 9 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.*

## **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/>
- Guidance on protecting vulnerable people from Covid-19: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
- 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>
- Guidance on social distancing: <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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