

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / 10.04.20

Weekend Service

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 stakeholder.intel@justice.gov.uk.

Service over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend

Further daily updates will continue over Good Friday and Saturday. Service will then resume on Tuesday 14 April.

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.
- Selected lower-risk offenders, within weeks of their release dates, and pregnant women in custody who do not pose a high risk of harm to the public will be temporarily released from prison. Additionally, works have begun to deliver 500 temporary, single occupancy units at seven jails. This will increase space in prisons and limit the spread of Coronavirus helping protect staff, prisoners and the NHS.

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>

Please note: we are unable to provide updated Covid-19 case information over the weekend. This information will continue to be communicated during weekday updates.

HMCTS

Online court and tribunal services for professional users and the public. HMCTS operate online court and tribunal services for professional users and members of the public. These services allow you to access courts and tribunals digitally. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/online-court-and-tribunal-services-for-professional-users-and-the-public>

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>

Legal Aid Agency

NEW: Domestic violence and child abuse: amendments to evidence requirements. We have expanded how domestic violence requirements may be evidenced to make it easier for victims of domestic and child abuse to access legal aid during this difficult period. Legal aid guidance, including general information on costs assessment and remuneration for civil and crime matters is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-and-costs-assessment-for-civil-and-crime-matters>

NEW: Prison video link disbursements. Where it is necessary, litigators can claim for the cost of setting up a video link to prison in lieu of travelling to see their clients. Options available to practitioners facing cash-flow problems when carrying out legal aid work can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-relief-for-legal-aid-practitioners>

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/government/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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