

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / 21.04.20

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 stakeholder.intel@justice.gov.uk.

- [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.

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NEW: Vulnerable groups set to benefit from improved legal aid support. Improvements made by the Ministry of Justice include changes to make the process easier for domestic abuse victims to qualify for legal aid, and reinstating immediate access to individual help for debt, discrimination and special educational needs (SEN) cases. The Legal Aid Agency will also be given the power to backdate payments for applications of legal help for inquests to the time at which the application was made, rather than when the application was granted. Read the full press release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vulnerable-groups-set-to-benefit-from-improved-legal-aid-support>

HMPPS

NEW: Jo Farrar, CEO of HMPPS, has written a blog for the Clinks website setting out how HMPPS is working with Clinks, and the third sector more broadly, to address the challenges presented by COVID. This blog gives an update on what HMPPS is doing to protect staff, delivery partners and the people in its care and supervision during the Covid-19 crisis. Read the blog at this link: <https://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/covid-19-update-jo-farrar-ceo-hmppps>

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 MONDAY 20 APRIL:

- 287 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 65 prisons;
- 217 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 54 prisons;
- 8 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 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>

Latest general guidance

- **UPDATED: Guidance for those involved in managing COVID-19 deaths.** This page sets out all the guidance currently available and includes official HMG guidance and advice from relevant authorities. This page is regularly updated: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-those-involved-in-managing-covid-19-deaths>
- Guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>
- The 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>
- 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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