

Ministry of Justice

COVID-19 Stakeholder Update / 23.04.20

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: The Ministry of Justice is providing £600,000 to victim and witness online and helpline services so they can increase the support they offer. Five organisations including Victim Support, Rape Crisis England and Wales, The Survivors Trust, Safeline, and NAPAC will receive the extra funding. More information can be found on the following links:

- National services offering emotional and practical support: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-victim-and-witness-services>
- Advice and support for victims of sexual violence: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-sexual-violence-and-abuse>
- Advice and support for victims of domestic abuse: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>
- Local support services are listed on our Victim and Witness Information website: <https://victimandwitnessinformation.org.uk>

Appreciating critical workers across the Justice system. At 8pm tonight, to coincide with the national 'clap' for critical workers, the MOJ, HMPPS and HMCTS will be publishing content across their social media channels. Please add your appreciation for these critical workers by sharing this content or creating your own content on social media and using the hashtag #JusticeHeroes and #HiddenHeroes.

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>

HMPPS

NEW: Youth Custody Service update: YCS is adapting its approach to delivery in order to meet the needs of children whilst complying with the wider guidance from Public Health England.

There remains a focus on delivering essential activities and ensuring that children remain engaged and stimulated. This includes regular phone calls (additional phone credit has been allocated), access to showers and education materials and time in the fresh air. Establishments are working to create activities that children can undertake in small groups or in their rooms, including workouts and greater access to television, entertainment and in-room activity material. An enhanced SECURE STAIRS team has come together to support staff and children, focusing on an approach that encourages interaction and protects the physical and mental health of young people whilst ensuring compliance with social distancing guidelines. Healthcare providers are closely monitoring young people who may be at risk as a result of underlying health conditions to ensure that necessary precautions or actions can be taken.

Work is progressing to review children in the youth estate who may be eligible for early release under the End of Custody Temporary Release programme. Work is taking place alongside NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Youth Justice Board to produce joint operational guidance, with the appropriate Youth Offending Teams and local authorities updated accordingly.

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 WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL:

- 300 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 69 prisons;
- 237 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 57 prisons;
- 10 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.

Legal Aid Agency

NEW: Updated Guidance has been published on the Legal Aid Agency contingency response Advice has been prepared setting out what the Legal Aid Agency is doing to help providers continue legal aid services for clients during the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-legal-aid-agency-contingency-response>

Latest general guidance

- Guidance for those involved in managing COVID-19 deaths: <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)