

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / weekend service 04.04.20

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 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.
- 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. This is to protect the NHS from the coronavirus risk in prisons, protect our officers and save lives.

HMPPS

NEW: The MoJ has announced measures to protect the NHS from coronavirus risk in prisons. Selected lower-risk offenders, within weeks of their release dates, will be electronically tagged and temporarily released on licence in stages. Taking this action is necessary to avoid thousands of prisoners becoming infected, overwhelming local NHS services. Read the full announcement here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/measures-announced-to-protect-nhs-from-coronavirus-risk-in-prisons>

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

NEW: HMCTS has updated guidance that tracks the list of open, staffed and suspended courts during the coronavirus outbreak. It will be regularly updated and included in the HMCTS operational update: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/courts-and-tribunals-tracker-list-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

NEW: HMCTS has updated guidance on telephone and video hearings during the coronavirus outbreak. It outlines the steps that HMCTS has taken to increase the capacity of existing systems and introduce new capabilities, and provides guidance on organising telephone and video-enabled hearings. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-telephone-and-video-hearings-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

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 maintains 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>

Judiciary

NEW: The Employment Tribunals in England and Wales and in Scotland have issued responses to FAQs arising from the coronavirus pandemic. It is aimed at assisting both those representing themselves and professional representatives. Read the FAQ document here: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FAQ-final.pdf>

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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