

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update / 08.04.20

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

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.

Victims and witnesses

NEW: Chancellor sets out extra coronavirus funding for domestic violence charities. As part of a wider financial package to support the charitable sector, the Treasury will provide funding to ensure that charities providing services to victims of domestic violence can continue to operate during the coronavirus outbreak. Read the full announcement here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-sets-out-extra-750-million-coronavirus-funding-for-frontline-charities>

The MoJ has extended the consultation on the updated Victims' Code to 28 May 2020, due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. Victims can share their views on the proposed changes to the code here: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/victim-policy/consultation-on-improving-the-victims-code/>

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>. Further information is available at: <https://www.victimandwitnessinformation.org.uk/>

HMCTS

NEW: HMCTS has published a blog by CEO Susan Acland-Hood about recent developments in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Readers are invited to submit questions relating to the operational running of HMCTS during the crisis. Read the blog

here: <https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/2020/04/08/responding-to-coronavirus-in-our-courts-and-tribunals/>

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 Tuesday 7 April:

- 129 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 47 prisons.
- 24 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 13 prisons.
- 5 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.

Justice Select Committee

NEW: A summary of yesterday's Justice Select Committee hearing is now available. Read the summary

here: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmjust/correspondence/200407-Justice-Committee-meeting-Robert-Buckland-note1.pdf>

Office of the Public Guardian

NEW: OPG has published guidance for the NHS and local authorities in England and Wales on how to search the OPG register to identify if individuals have a power of attorney or deputyship in place. The guidance includes a template for these organisations to email OPG requesting the relevant information. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-staff-searching-our-registers-of-attorneys-and-deputies>

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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