

Ministry of Justice

COVID-19 Stakeholder Update / 29.04.20

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.

HMPPS

NEW: Further expansion of the prison estate. The former Medway Secure Training Centre, which will be temporarily used as an annex to nearby HMP Rochester, is receiving its first adult prisoners today. It will house up to 70 category D adult prisoners as part of broader work to temporarily expand the prison estate and reduce the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks. Over 300 temporary, single occupancy cells have now been delivered to nine prisons. Read more here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-expansion-of-prison-estate-to-protect-nhs>

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 28 APRIL:

- 337 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 71 prisons;
- 337 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 63 prisons;
- 11 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>

Legal Aid Agency

NEW: Update on interim and hardship payments to help legal aid firms in Crown Court Trials. The Legal Aid Agency has updated its financial relief guidance page with advice and tables outlining how legal aid firms in Crown Court Trials can claim interim and hardship payments during the COVID-19 outbreak. Read the full guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-relief-for-legal-aid-practitioners>

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)