

# Ministry of Justice

## Covid-19 Stakeholder Update 31.03.20

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 would find it helpful to know about your own communications plans and any intel that will help inform our communications moving forwards. If you know an organisation which should be added to the list, please do get in touch

at [samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk) or [thomas.cracknell@justice.gov.uk](mailto: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.
- Prisons are well prepared to take immediate action wherever cases or suspected cases are identified, including the isolation of individuals where necessary. We are issuing secure phone handsets to help offenders keep in contact with their families

### **HMPPS**

**NEW: Pregnant prisoners and prisoners in Mother and Baby Units are to be temporarily released from custody to protect them from coronavirus.** Prison governors will now be able to grant their release on temporary licence once they pass a risk assessment and suitable accommodation for the women has been identified. In addition, from today transfers within the prison estate will be limited in all but exceptional cases. Read the full announcement here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pregnant-prisoners-to-be-temporarily-released-from-custody>

**NEW: Q&A for friends and families of prisoners.** A Q&A has been published on the GOV.UK prisons and coronavirus page, which answers some of the questions asked most frequently on social media and via helplines. The document will continue to be regularly updated. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-qa-for-friends-and-family-of-prisoners>

*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 30 MARCH:

- 65 prisoners have tested positive for COVID-19 across 23 prisons;
- 14 prison staff have tested positive for COVID-19 across 8 prisons;
- 4 Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) staff have tested positive for COVID-19.

Further updates with the latest figures are likely to 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 includes a link to updated 'open courts' lists, following the consolidation of work into fewer buildings: <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**

- The new Business Support campaign for Covid-19: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>
- Major new measures to protect people at highest risk from Coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-measures-to-protect-people-at-highest-risk-from-coronavirus>
- 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>
- Social distancing / vulnerable people: <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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