**Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support and Covid 19/Coronavirus**

1 **)            How we will provide access to faith services assuming that prisoners are contained in cells and not able to attend a service? – some innovative ideas have been suggested – faith services recorded and out over prison radio or on TV channels for instance?**

For Muslims – they will make ablution in their cells and pray the noon prayer Dhuhr, instead of the major communal Friday prayer.  Guidelines have already been given to Muslim chaplains.  Islamic classes, although not essential will be cancelled. Can still be recorded and given out. In addition there are many pre-recorded resources available.

For Anglicans and Roman Catholics corporate worship is either the Eucharist (Mass) or a Service of the word. When the Eucharist is celebrated it is usually by bread and wine, although since the Covid 19 outbreak this has changed to bread only. It is not possible to celebrate communion door to door. Where individual prisoners request it and doors can be opened it may be possible to offer the bread if there are consecrated elements held in the establishment or accessible from the local parish. These unprecedented times this will only be required in exceptional circumstances i.e. if the individual is potentially close to their own death, or there is another pastoral reason to do so. In the absence of the Eucharist and any corporate gathering, morning and evening prayer can be said individually a prayer sheet may be made available for each establishment for the Chaplain to photocopy and deliver to all those who would wish. This will have the effect of uniting our faith community in prayer wherever we are.

The important elements to the Free Churches community communally are the ability to worship together through prayer, praise and the word. The ability to share communion is an important sacrament for us, however it is not considered by most to be an essential weekly article. Depending on periods of isolation, this element of communal worship in FC prison services could be suspended. If access to prisoners is limited to “through the doors” and a prisoner requested communion, then this could be offered by most Free Churches Chaplains as authorised from their accrediting communities, but only if the door can be opened. Worship could be enabled either through Prison Radio or by issuing of worship CDs, again for a limited time. We consider it would be inappropriate in most settings for personal prayers to be offered through the door (see item below on pastoral support), though communal, community prayers could perhaps be written each week by  the FC Chaplain, or as above the FC Advisor could issue this on a weekly basis to every establishment.

All corporate worship and group faith related activities for all faith traditions have now been suspended as a result of the latest government guidelines.

**What level of support could faith teams provide – assuming people are contained, could chaplaincy staff visit to the door to speak to people?**

Due to the latest government guidelines issued on 23 March 2020, wings across the estate are on lockdown apart from domestics such as serving of the meals, showers and phone calls.

Depending on chaplaincy, a Chaplain could visit the wing and go round cell to cell, advising and offering support and generally calming individual prisoners.  The psychological effects of being locked in the cell for long periods needs thought.

Such visits ought to be possible and will be hugely important if prisoners are to spend significant periods of time behind their doors. This should only happen if the Chaplain in question and the prisoner(s) being visited are symptom free and therefore unlikely to pose any risk to each other but then again we are being told that people can carry the virus and not display symptoms.

It is wholly inappropriate to limit these visits to ‘through the door’ encounters as this would severely limit the reality of such an encounter being pastoral in practice. As with access to Samaritans, resources via technology will be investigated. In prisons where the ‘digital prisons project’ was applied, or where prisoners have access to telephones in cells, this facility should be enabled to allow access via dedicated phone line to take place. Where this is not possible, then a means for confidential 1:1 access does need to be considered as a priority. Speaking to a prisoner on a wing through their door does not enable best pastoral support, simply a means of public communication.

Chaplains will remain available to support all prison staff as part of their routine duties as they and their families go through this difficult time. In addition, chaplains will be available to help support family liaison officers as their workload is likely to grow.

 **3)            What your thoughts would be about maintaining other pastoral services – seg rounds, funeral escorts, etc.**

The normal statutory duties can be maintained: rounds to healthcare, segregation, receptions and ACCTs.  But this would be dependent on the level of chaplaincy staffing. Core chaplaincy functions will be prioritised by Chaplaincy Headquarters and forwarded to Managing Chaplains.

**4)            Whether we could produce prisoner literature – faith services in cell for each faith?**

Most establishments have a plethora of literature that they can offer the prisoner – reading and audio/video material. A few establishments and faiths may have to purchase material for this eventuality. We also be asking for the sermons/homilies/addresses that would be delivered at weekly worship/Friday prayers, etc. to be written and delivered to those who would normally attend services to give them some additional spiritual encouragement.

Chaplains will be encouraged to work with their other colleagues with the help of Headquarters to develop appropriate teaching material for dissemination door-to-door to regular attenders. Prison Radio / Wayout TV etc… would be an appropriate means to do this in the short-term. For prisons with something like WayOut TV, sermons – discipleship materials could be recorded.

**Whether we could ensure that all prisoners of each faith have religious items in cell assuming they cannot access the faith space.**

Religious artefacts are already provided for the prisoner for in cell devotion. Establishments should ensure that they have stock of core items where possible. If however deliveries dry up because Amazon etc aren’t allowed to make deliveries then logically such deliveries won’t be allowed anywhere. The best Chaplains might be able to do in these circumstances is bring in resources they have sourced themselves subject to local permission being granted.

In all things it is essential that we encourage Chaplains to be fully involved in the local risk assessment and contingency planning processes, these are exceptional times and Chaplains need to be integrated and innovative in their working practices and responses.

We also need to be aware that there may be substantial numbers of prisoners’ relatives who die as a result of this outbreak, Chaplains need to ensure their processes for confirming the news, delivering the news in a normal a way as circumstances allow, recording the actions and providing pastoral care that is robust and effective (best practice info is on our intranet). Furthermore there is obviously the real possibility that prisoners may die as a result of the infection, again Chaplains should be actively involved in the process of supporting all those affected by the death as appropriate. This is currently done through gathering those affected in the prison community to reflect together – alternative means to enable effective reflection and facilitating the mourning process need to be considered very carefully to ensure prisoner and staff safety. Chaplaincy Headquarters will meet daily and will review guidance in the light of developments.

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