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|  | Criminal Casework12th Floor, Lunar House40 Wellesley roadCroydon CR9 2BYwww.gov.uk |
|  | Tuesday 24 March 2020  |

Prison Governors

I wanted to write to you to update you regarding the Home Office approach to the management of Foreign National Offenders given the rapid changing environment we are all experiencing.

I would like to bring the following to your attention:

* The number of countries where we can enforce removals is under constant review and we are continuing to detain and return people where we can. Country specific challenges are being mirrored by an increasing difficulty in securing flights given reduced airline availability, particularly where we transit through Europe. The restrictions have impacted a number of our key routes and Home Office colleagues are reviewing all detainees’ cases in light of their individual circumstances in this ever-changing situation.
* Additionally, I would like to give you assurance that Home Office teams remain committed to providing a service in prisons. I have asked my teams to maintain a visible presence in prisons, for as long as it is safe to do so and in line with PHE guidelines. Furthermore, Home Office teams, both those in prisons and case working teams, will continue to ensure that the authorisation and maintenance of detention of anyone is considered in line with established policies. This includes the consideration of the known vulnerabilities and risks of those who have been identified as vulnerable under the published Home Office Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention Policy, and how their specific vulnerabilities might put them at greater risk in the event that COVID-19 impacts the prison estate. The Adults at Risk policy (AAR) is used by Immigration Enforcement officials to determine whether a person being considered for immigration detention is vulnerable to harm in detention. For these cases, particular care will need to be taken in respect of the latest PHE guidance including the risk factors identified therein and the relationship with an individual’s known risks/vulnerabilities under the AAR policy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

* Case by case assessments by relevant case working teams are occurring and there continues to be a need for close interaction with prisons, Immigration Removal Centres, Home Office contractors and healthcare teams, however it is likely that if the virus impacts increase key stakeholders may struggle to meet deadlines for service of detention and release documents and transfer to Immigration Removal Centres.
* Looking forward, detention issues remain a vital component of our response to Covid-19 and the Home office is actively reviewing cases to ensure any impacts can be managed.

We would ask that we continue to work together and ask that as the situation in your prison changes and if there is any possibility for access to be restricted to Home Office staff that we are informed so that we can revise our plans.

Again, I would like to thank you for your resilience through this difficult period

Yours sincerely



Georgina Balmforth

Director Criminal Casework