**Guidance for Negotiators during Covid19**

The primary risk reduction actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus are to wash hands frequently, avoid touching your face and to observe the GOV.UK social distancing rule. These rules continue to apply to negotiation situations.

## Negotiator to Perpetrator(s) Communication

The normal operating procedure for negotiation during a serious incident is to stand well back from the scene to ensure personal safety. This should ensure social distancing occurs as a natural consequence of adopting good negotiation practice.

There may be some situations where social distancing is more difficult to achieve – for example when negotiating in a narrow space such as a landing or stairwell. The first choice should be to seek ways to rearrange the negotiation scene to ensure social distancing is observed. In this instance, a dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken.

The negative impact of PPE on communication should be considered and mitigated where possible.

Where maintaining the GOV.UK social distance is not achievable and in these circumstances it is for the Silver commander to make decisions about issuing of PPE. Details of the application of hygiene measures and PPE are contained within the current relevant SOP (Operational tasks including sub 2 metre contact for sustained and unavoidable tasks). All current and published SOPs are available via the following link:

<https://hmppsintranet.org.uk/except/>

PPE is specified as:

1. Surgical Mask

2. Nitrile Gloves

3. Disposable Apron

4. Eye Protection (where there is a risk of spitting/bodily fluids)

Hygiene Specifications include alcohol hand gels containing at least 60% alcohol content. Guidance detailed in the relevant SOPs provides information on the donning and doffing of PPE and disposal arrangements.

PPE and Hygiene Stocks are available in Prisons via their internal stocks, each wing grab pack, first aid and self-harm packs, escort and bed watch packs and additional stocks supplied to reception areas. Restock and supply is available from the regional PPE Hub.

The use of fluid-resistant eye-shields should be considered especially where the risk of spitting is possible (for example during incidents on netting), but it remains preferable to use a 2m minimum distance.

As with all other aspects of managing a serious incident, the assessment of risks posed to negotiators is a dynamic process and should be reviewed during the incident.

Negotiators should be aware of the potential to reduce the distance between themselves and the perpetrator(s) as a negotiation progresses and should resist the temptation to move towards the perpetrator. The use of markers on the floor (piece of paper, bottle of water, etc.) may help to remind negotiators of the appropriate point. A closed or locked door should not be assumed to present a safe barrier (liquids can be thrown down the side of a door) and GOV.UK social distance rule is still relevant.

### Negotiator to negotiator communication

The greater risk of compromising the GOV.UK social distance rule is where negotiators communicate between themselves. The provision and use of flipcharts and clipboards is essential. It is important that negotiators are briefed to maintain social distancing when working together as a team.

### Other Considerations

Silver commanders should ensure they brief negotiators to adopt and maintain these measures before deploying negotiators to the scene.

PPE should not be routinely used and the decision to use PPE should not be made without authorisation by the Silver commander.

Sites may wish to ensure that the appropriate PPE is readily available at the Prisons as outlined above.

Negotiators must not be from the current GOV.UK shielded vulnerable group of persons (i.e.: pregnant workers, those with serious underlying medical conditions as described and updated within the national GOV.UK briefings). Refer to current HMPPS guidance on staff who are within the vulnerable GOV.UK groups.