

**INFORMATION FOR PRISONERS ON INDUCTION – COVID-19 AND KEEPING SAFE**

**WHAT IS THIS LEAFLET FOR?**

This leaflet will provide answers to some questions you might have about being in prison during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. It also gives you information on what to expect during your first few days and weeks in prison, what help you can get and how to get it. Please read it through and if you have any questions, speak to your wing staff who will do their best to answer your questions.

The situation around COVID-19 is quickly changing, and we will keep you updated on how any changes in the community will affect your life here in prison.

Being in prison during this time can be worrying, but the staff and prison are doing their best to keep everyone safe. Following the guidance in this document will help keep you and those around you safe.

**COPING IN PRISON**

Coming into prison can be a stressful experience. If you’ve just arrived you will be OK and staff are here to help.

**At the moment things are a little different in prisons to protect people from the COVID-19 virus.**

This is because we are trying to keep everyone as safe as we can, and keeping a distance between everyone is the most effective way of doing this.

**It may take longer for you to get access to things, please bear with us, we can get very busy, so please try to understand if things seem slow.**

Over the next few days you will begin your induction and start to learn about everyday prison life, also known as the regime.

**Feel free to ask questions if you are not sure about anything, the staff are here to help. It’s okay to talk.**

You may find that you sometimes feel distressed or low in mood. You might not have been expecting to go to prison, be worrying about things that are happening on the outside, or have difficult things in your own life you’re thinking about. Whilst experiencing these emotions can be difficult, it is important to remember that you are not alone, help is available and these feelings won’t last forever. If you would like to talk to somebody about your problems, then this prison has various systems in place in order to help you.

**Samaritans:** If you feel that talking to someone outside prison, would help you can call Samaritans by calling 08457 909090 and then entering the PIN number displayed by wing/billet telephones when prompted. This number is already on your PIN. Your prison may also have Samaritans phones.

Samaritans also offers a confidential letter writing service in every prison for prisoners seeking emotional support; please feel free to ask a member of staff what is available to you.

**Listeners:** The prison also has a number of Listeners available to assist you. Listeners are prisoners just like you, but trained by Samaritans. Listeners will treat everything they hear from you as confidential and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Other support available:** If you don’t feel that you want to talk to Samaritans or Listeners, there are still other support sources available to you.

This includes:

- Other prisoners who are also peer supporters (such as Insiders)

- Chaplaincy

- Prisoner information desks

- Healthcare

- Activity packs to use in your cell

To access any of these, speak to a member of staff.

You can also talk to any member of staff if you are feeling unsafe, or having a difficult time. Any member of staff can help organise the right support for you and there is no shame in asking for help – we all need a little support at some point in our lives.

If staff are concerned about your safety, they may organise for you to be supported through the ACCT process. This stands for Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork, and brings different support services across the prison together to come up with a care plan designed to help you through the period of crisis.

Remember, whenever you feel like you’re struggling to cope, you won’t feel this way forever. With the right help we will help you get through it.

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

**COVID-19*:*** COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the Coronavirus. Most people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate symptoms and will not require treatment. Older people, or those who have underlying health conditions are more likely to develop a serious illness. COVID-19 is mainly transferred between people through droplets generated by coughing and sneezing.

**Symptomatic:** Being symptomatic means that someone is showing symptoms for COVID-19. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a persistent dry cough, fever, tiredness and anosmia which is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell.

**Social Distancing:**In the same way as in the community we are asking all prisoners and staff to keep a two metre distance from each other wherever possible at all times. We have reduced the number of people who are unlocked at the same time to make it easier to keep your distance from others, and staff will also do their best to keep a distance wherever possible. This is the most effective way of stopping the spread of the virus so keeping your distance from others is the most effective way that you can keep yourself and others safe.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET SYMPTOMS?**

If you get symptoms of COVID-19 then it is really important that the healthcare staff at your prison know. If you have symptoms you shouldn’t leave your cell or room as this could spread the virus. You should press the cell or billet assistance bell and inform an officer who will speak to healthcare for you, and ask that they come and assess you.

If healthcare staff think that you have symptoms of COVID-19 then you will be required to isolate for at least 7 days. Any other prisoners you share a cell or room with will be asked to isolate for 14 days even if they don’t have any symptoms. This includes those on your billet or landing if you are in open conditions. You need to isolate from others so that the virus does not spread.

You will not be taken to hospital unless you are very poorly, as most of the time, COVID-19 only leads to mild symptoms that will not require hospital treatment. If you have symptoms, healthcare staff will come to see you regularly to make sure you are okay.

**IF I SEE SOMEONE ELSE WITH SYMPTOMS WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

It is normal to be worried if you see someone around you with symptoms of the virus, but remember that coughing is a common symptom and could be caused by something else. Speak to them and ask them how they are feeling and then make an agreement to press the cell or assistance bell and let an officer know who can then ask healthcare to do an assessment.

**WHAT IF A STAFF MEMBER WHO COMES INTO MY CELL OR ROOM HAS IT? CAN I STOP THEM COMING IN?**

Staff are not allowed to come to work if they have symptoms of the virus, so the risk to you is reduced as much as possible. Staff will try to limit the amount that they come into your cell or room as much as they can however there might still be times that this is necessary. You cannot refuse to let them in and you will get into trouble if you do this. There are certain situations where staff will wear Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves and face masks around you to protect themselves and you as much as they can.

**I HAVE SEEN STAFF WEARING GLOVES AND MASKS – SHOULD I BE WEARING THEM? WHY HAVEN’T THEY BEEN PROVIDED?**

Risk assessments have been done to work out who needs to wear equipment like gloves and masks and when they need to be worn. It is not necessary to wear them all the time, and guidance will be given if you are required to wear it. If it is required, this will be provided to you.

**WHAT IS COHORTING?**

To reduce the risk of the virus being spread within prison communities, prisons have had to change the way that they manage and organise people to ensure that those who are symptomatic do not have contact with everyone else, and that those who are vulnerable to COVID-19 are protected as much as possible. This is known as cohorting.

Prisons have been asked to organise areas to house 3 specific groups of people:

* Reverse Cohort Unit (RCU) – an area designated to house newly received prisoners for a period of 14 days to ensure that they are not symptomatic before they move into the main residential area.
* Protective Isolation Unit (PIU) – an area for the temporary isolation of symptomatic prisoners.
* Shielding Unit (SU) – an area to house prisoners who have been identified as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable in line with NHS guidance in order to keep them separate from the rest of the population and protect them from the virus.

These ‘units’ may not be in three separate areas, and things are likely to change over time.

If you have just arrived in prison or been transferred to a new prison, you will probably have been housed on your prison’s RCU for the first 14 days, or you will have been housed on a regular wing and given a separate regime for your first 14 days. This is because you have been outside of the prison, and there is a risk that you may have been in contact with the virus. You will be kept on the RCU for 14 days as this is the incubation period of the virus during which symptoms would normally start to show. You will be entitled to the appropriate level of regime as the rest of the prison whilst on the RCU or whilst being given an RCU regime, it is just important that you do not come in to contact with anybody else to ensure that if you are carrying the virus, you do not spread it.

If you are classed as ‘vulnerable’ due to your age or any underlying health conditions, the healthcare department will probably have already approached you to discuss the option of shielding for your protection. This is completely voluntary, but it is recommended to keep you safe. If you feel that you should be classed as vulnerable and have not yet been approached by healthcare, please tell a member of staff who will speak to healthcare for you.

Everyone on each of the 3 cohorting units will be entitled to the same amount of regime, although this may be provided in a different way to keep you safe.

**WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PRISONERS?**

This is a UK government strategy to better manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Contact tracing happens when a person is confirmed via a test to have COVID-19 and there are checks being done to confirm who this person has had a close contact with. Close contact is defined as:

* Face to face contact including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, unprotected physical contact (skin to skin) or travel in a small vehicle with a case. This includes exposure within 1 metre for 1 minute.
* Extended close contact (between 1 and 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with a positive case.
* This involves contact at any time from 48 hours before the symptoms of the person started to 7 days after the symptoms started (or the test came back positive).

If a prisoner (or member of staff) tests positive, their contacts will be checked by the prison and Public Health England. People who have been identified as their close contacts will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days. This is because there is a good chance they may have got infected.

Prisons will discretely inform those who need to self-isolate without revealing the identity of a person who tested positive. If you are advised to self-isolate, (e.g. you shared a cell with a positive case) you will be expected to do it for 14 days. This will allow to assess whether you have got the symptoms and may have got infected.

If you had a contact with the infected person but followed the current rules, e.g. stayed 2 meters apart, you **do not** need to self-isolate. If you are tested positive, you may be confidentially asked about your contacts.

Please work together with staff and follow their advice as this has been set up to protect you and other people from the virus.

If you have any questions, ask your wing staff who will be able to find out the answers for you.

**PRISON REGIME DURING COVID-19**

**REGIME DURING COVID-19**

In line with Government guidance on social distancing all prisons are restricting their regimes to help keep people safe.

This means:

* There is currently no access to visits, gymnasium, sports, education or other programmes.
* Essential work such as catering and cleaning is continuing but in a way that will allow social distancing in order to keep you safe. Where available, protective equipment is being issued to those working in these areas. You will still receive your meals but you will not be able to eat in groups. Unlock will be controlled to make sure there is the minimum contact between people at mealtimes
* You will still have access to a phone and will be unlocked to use one safely. If you are sharing a cell and have an in-cell phone you should clean it after every use. If you are in an open prison you will still have unrestricted access to billet or landing telephones.
* You can still do your laundry on your wing but only by keeping a safe distance from others.
* You will still be allowed regular access to showers and hygiene materials but only a small number of you will be unlocked together (unless you are in an open prison with unrestricted access to these facilities).

In order to ensure that everyone receives the regime that they are entitled to, you may find staff ask you to do things that seem a bit unusual, such as asking you to walk certain routes around the wing or grounds, or asking you to use facilities (such as phones and showers) on your own in closed prison conditions even though there is space for more people to use them. Please look out for floor markings and signs and stick to the instructions. These are designed for your safety and match those in the community. The reason for this is that we are trying to keep everyone as safe as we can, and keeping a distance between everyone is the most effective way of doing this. We thank you for your co-operation.

You should have been provided with information about the regime at your establishment. If you have not, please speak to a member of wing staff. It may take longer for you to get access to things, please bear with us, we will do everything we can to minimise the impact on you.

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**HOW LONG WILL THE REGIME RESTRICTIONS BE IN PLACE? WHAT IS PRISON DOING ABOUT THE RELAXATION OF RULES IN THE COMMUNITY?**

This is a new situation to which everyone has had to adapt. You will have seen this affecting the life in prison: to keep you safe we have had to adjust all parts of the regime. Recently, you may have also seen that some of the restrictions in the community are being slowly lifted. We are always monitoring this to make sure we stay up-to-date with the newest events. However, prisons are obviously very special environments where any outbreak of the virus can be particularly unsafe. This is why we need to be extra careful when considering our regime and what changes can be made and when. It’s difficult to give exact dates but it is fair to say that this may be a slow and long process. We do not want to put you, other prisoners or staff in danger, but we know how important the regime is for your life now. This is why we will keep all prisoners informed as we are carefully planning bringing back more activities.

**WILL I HAVE A KEY WORKER? WHO IS IT?**

Key-work will be temporarily suspended in some prisons which means that you may not be seen by your keyworker until the period is over. Some prisons are still able to run key-work. Wing staff will be able to check who your keyworker is, and let you know whether they will be coming to see you or not. If you have any urgent queries, speak to wing staff who will do their best to help you.

**WILL THERE BE DIFFERENT STAFF ON THE WINGS EACH DAY?**

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading, prisons are trying to keep the same staff in the same areas as much as they can, so you should see some familiar faces around the wing. This is not always possible, but please don’t worry as all staff are aware of the safety procedures in place.

**WHEN WILL I GET A VISIT?**

Because of Covid-19 all visits have been stopped for now. We need to be sure that it is safe before visits start again. When we know this, we will tell you. As we can’t allow visits at the moment, you will receive:

* *Extra snacks and refreshments for free* (this means you will have more of your own money to spend on phone credit to contact your family and friends).
* *A TV in your room for free* (the TV rental fee has been suspended during Covid-19. Incentives and Earned Privileges restrictions on TVs have also been lifted so that everyone can have one).
* At the moment due to COVID-19 we are also providing everyone with an extra £5 pin phone credit every week (roughly 60 minutes) to help you keep in contact with your loved ones.
* The ‘Email a Prisoner’ service is still running so your loved ones can use this to contact you too. This is a service where your family or friends can send an email to you through the prison. Any emails sent will be printed off and delivered to your cell or room. Where available you can write a reply on the back of it and we will reply for you. When you speak to your friends tell them to visit [www.emailaprisoner.com](http://www.emailaprisoner.com) to see if your prison is on their system.

**CAN I STILL GET PROPERTY AND MONEY SENT IN?**

Unfortunately at the moment some prisons are limiting or stopping property from being sent in. This is because the virus can be transmitted on items such as clothing or books, and so stopping it being sent in helps reduce the risk to everyone in prison. You should speak to your wing staff to find out the rules at your prison about property. You are still able to have money sent in to you, and can spend it as normal on your canteen sheet.

**WELFARE, CANTEEN AND FINANCES**

Other things prisons have introduced during Covid-19:

* All prisoners will continue to be paid their normal wages despite not being able to go to work. If you have just arrived, this means you will receive the same money you normally would for completing induction, and you will be paid unemployment pay as normal.
* Due to restrictions, all religious services and gatherings have been suspended the same as in the community. Pastoral and religious support is still available through the chaplaincy team at each prison. Please speak to your wing staff to find out what this involves at your prison.
* Canteen (shop) will still happen during the COVID-19 period, however there will be some small changes to how it operates.
* Like in the community, some limits have been introduced on the number of items available to buy so that everyone has fair access.
* To order things from the shop you need to fill in the canteen order sheet.
* You can order phone credit, sweets, snacks, and stationery, as well as a few other items. You will find out when you can order and how things are delivered, at your induction.
* Friends or family can send you money by going to [www.gov.uk/send-prisoner-money](http://www.gov.uk/send-prisoner-money)

**HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT?**

If there is something you are not happy about in your prison, you are still able to make a complaint as normal through the complaints forms which you can ask your wing staff to provide. The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) are still operating on your behalf, but they may not be able to come into prisons as regularly due to restrictions on movement. Their role is to monitor the day-to-day life in their local prisons and ensure that proper standards of care and decency are maintained. You can fill in an IMB form with any issues you have and this will be sent to them as normal.

**IMPORTANT LEGAL INFORMATION DURING COVID-19**

**PAROLE/OFFENDER MANAGAMENT UNIT/SENTENCE PLANNING/COURT**

Due to COVID-19, all face-to-face oral hearings with the Parole Board have been postponed. The parole board is reviewing its caseload to identify cases that could be conducted on paper or via remote telephone or video link hearing. You will not be prevented from progressing to a lower category prison, however it does mean this may be delayed. Despite the fact that all visits have been suspended, you will still be able to contact your legal team to discuss your case and any upcoming parole board hearings. You will be able to access the phone daily and your prison will provide writing materials free of charge. The offender management staff in your prison will keep you updated on the situation surrounding any boards you may have coming up and will inform you if they are postponed or adjourned.

Most court cases have been suspended until courts can be made safe enough to be used. Lots of work is being done on this. If you have a court case coming up that you are worried about, speak to your legal team who will be able to let you know whether the case is going ahead or not, and whether there will be a delay to the case.

**TRANSFERS**

Since the end of March, all routine prison transfers have been temporarily stopped. This means that unless there is an exceptional circumstance, you will not be transferred until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. We understand that this is frustrating, particularly for those of you who were waiting to be transferred, but stopping transfers is the best way to ensure that the virus is not spread between establishments. This does not mean your progression to a lower category prison will be stopped, but it may be a longer process than normal.

**RELEASES**

Despite the changes to regime and OMU, release dates will NOT be affected by COVID-19. That means if you are due to be released during the COVID-19 period, this will still happen as normal. The process for being released may be slightly different at reception in order to prepare you for life outside during COVID-19, but this will be the only difference. If you are due to be released and you are symptomatic of COVID-19, you will not be stopped from being released, but will be given guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading the virus when you get out and how best to protect yourself and others.

**COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COVID-19**

This part of the leaflet lists some common myths about COVID-19 and corrects them to ensure you know all the right information about the virus and how to protect yourself and others. If you have any other questions, please speak to the healthcare staff at your prison who will do their best to answer them.

**I have a cough, so must have coronavirus.**

False. While a new or continuous cough is a symptom of coronavirus, this alone does not mean you have the virus. The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

* A persistent dry cough
* Fever
* Tiredness
* Anosmia which is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell.

If you do develop any of the symptoms above it is important to notify your wing officer. It also remains vitally important to look after your health and wellbeing during this time. Drink water, maintain regular sleeping patterns and undertake light exercise in your cell whenever you can.

**Someone on my wing has been moved on from the Isolation wing as they had symptoms. Are we at more risk?**

No. Healthcare will not move anyone off of an isolation wing until they are sure that they are free from the virus. They may still have a cough but this does not mean they are contagious. You should continue to socially distance as normal but you are not at any increased risk.

**Someone on my wing has symptoms of coronavirus, are we all going to catch it?**

No. Anyone with suspected coronavirus will be cared for by healthcare to ensure they do not spread it to anyone else. If you maintain social distancing procedures and good hygiene, you will decrease your risk of catching it.

**Only elderly people are at risk. Young people and children cannot catch COVID-19.**

False. Coronavirus can infect people of any age. However, older adults or individuals with pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes or asthma, are more likely to become severely ill.

**Antibiotics kill COVID-19.**

Antibiotics only kill bacteria; they do not kill viruses. COVID-19 is a virus and therefore antibiotics will be ineffective against it.

**The virus will die off when temperatures rise in the summer.**

Some viruses, such as cold and flu viruses, do spread more easily in the colder months, but that does not mean that they stop entirely when conditions become milder. As it stands, scientists do not know how temperature changes will influence the behaviour of COVID-19.

**Rinsing the nose or gargling with different solutions protects against COVID-19.**

There is no evidence that a nose rinsing or gargling protects against respiratory infections. It could actually cause you more harm.

**Home remedies can cure and protect against COVID-19.**

Some people think that home remedies like vitamin C, essential oils, silver colloid, sesame oil, and garlic, fish tank cleaner, burning sage, and sipping water every 15 minutes can protect against COVID-19 but this is not true. The best approach is to adopt a good hand-washing regime and to follow rules about social distancing.

**Everyone with COVID-19 dies.**

False. As mentioned above, COVID-19 is only fatal for a small percentage of people. Most people will experience a relatively mild form of the disease, which will not require specialist treatment in a hospital.

**The governor and staff at this prison are committed to a zero tolerance approach to violence; creating and maintaining a safe environment for prisoners, staff & visitors. Anti-social behaviour or bullying in any form will not be tolerated. If you have any concerns please reach out to a staff member.**