Dear all

The current restrictions and their application in prisons are as follows:

**Rule of Six**

On 08 September 2020, HM Government announced that from Monday 14 September 2020, social gatherings of more than six people will be illegal in England. In Wales, meetings or gatherings indoors must be limited to 6 people, not including any children aged under 11 (outdoor gatherings of up to 30 people are still permitted). However prisons and secure custodial settings are exempt both as “workplaces”, Criminal Justice settings and on the basis that we operate in a COVID secure manner with significant COVID controls, including reverse cohorting of every prisoner on arrival. Establishments therefore do not need to make any changes to their regime delivery on account of the latest UK and Welsh Government announcements on social gatherings.

This announcement does however signal an increased level of community infection and we must be vigilant at this time notably to the risk of infection incursion.  The level of infection in prisons remains low and therefore we must be alert to the transmission of the infection through staff, through escorts and bedwatches, those release on temporary licence and social and professional visitors.  Adherence to our safe operating procedures is the best way to manage this risk.

**Bolton**

The UK Government have also announced the latest round of localised restrictions in different parts of the country and some of these restrictions will affect prisons, albeit to varying degrees. Recently announced restrictions in Bolton affect the operation of hospitality businesses and introduce a ban on the mixing of households. Criminal Justice settings such as prisons are exempt from such regulations and therefore these restrictions will not affect social visits or any other areas. We expect the exemption from restrictions in Bolton to be typical of the localised restrictions we will see in other areas. However there may be cases where prison settings are not exempt and we cannot assume it will always be the case.

**Caerphilly**

On 8September 2020, regulations imposing more stringent localised restrictions in Caerphilly County Borough Council were introduced by Welsh Government. People are not allowed  to enter or leave the Caerphilly County Borough Council area without “reasonable excuse”. Everyone over 11 will be required to wear face coverings indoors with limited exemptions. People will only be able to meet outdoors and will not be able to meet those from other households indoors. People will not be able to form an extended household with others and will not be permitted to travel without “exceptional excuse”. ***Social visits to prisons will generally not be allowed for individuals from the Caerphilly CBC area***. The exception to this is where a visit may be allowed on compassionate grounds. This decision will be taken by the prison on a case by case basis and may include the consideration of the relationship or circumstances of visit. For young people, the guidance from WG states that visits to a young offenders institution may be considered as a visit on compassionate grounds. Official visits from individuals within the lockdown area should be undertaken wherever possible by virtual means (phone, video etc.), but where this is not possible and the visit needs to go ahead, physical visits would be permitted.

We must consider the Article 8 rights of children and families in our decisions and consider whether there are exceptional compassionate reasons to permit a visit. Establishments are advised to check home postcodes of any arriving visitor (using the existing data supplied when booking a visit) to determine whether they are from Caerphilly and to consider whether there are particular compassionate grounds to permit a visit. Establishments may wish to utilise the online postcode linked below for this purpose. [https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Ffind-local-council&data=02%7C01%7CJonathan.Jones1%40gov.wales%7Cc2b5ddba08aa4007745d08d853d3d195%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637351516495860136&sdata=ub6DnQcujFhdiL6gDXyXpSPyKXfTHkFSUjwDzhFpUNA%3D&reserved=0)

**Rhondda Cynon Taf**

On 17th September Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council area applied the same stringent localised restrictions as Caerphilly Borough Council including prohibiting movement in and  out of the area, with additional regulations imposed on licensed premise.  The above advice regarding social visits generally not being permitted from residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf apply in the same as Caerphilly.  There must be thorough consideration of individual circumstances and whether an express compassionate reason exists to allow a visit to be permitted.

**North East**

From Friday 18 September, regulations will ban the following:

* residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households or support bubble in private homes and gardens
* hospitality for food and drink will be restricted to table service only
* late night restriction of operating hours will be introduced, with leisure and entertainment venues required to close between 10pm to 5am

Residents are also advised to adhere to the following guidance to further reduce rates of infection:

* not to socialise with other people outside of their own households in all public venues.
* only to use public transport for essential purposes, such as travelling to school or work
* take holidays only within your own household or support bubble
* avoid attending amateur and semi-professional sporting events as spectators

The current operation of prison regimes in the North East will be considered in light of the higher risk in the region however the restrictions like Bolton do not expressly cover prisons.

**Other**

There are a range of other existing local restrictions in place that can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-restrictions-areas-with-an-outbreak-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

These include:

* Birmingham (city council area)
* Sandwell (metropolitan borough council area)
* Solihull (metropolitan borough council area)
* Leicester
* Blackburn, Darwen, Pendle and Oldham

Work is underway to streamline the process for alerting prisons to a heightened risk that warrants regime review or local action using a national “heat map”.

Queries related to the implementation of localised restrictions should be directed to COVID19.Regimes&OpsGuidance@justice.gov.uk in the first instance.

Kind Regards,

GOLD Command