Dear Executive Directors, Prison Group Directors,

Further to the Gold Briefing issued on 11 December, I now write to confirm the HMPPS position following the reduction in the self-isolation period from 14 to 10 days for individuals in the community.

The following applies to staff and prisoners in England and Wales and is effective immediately.

**Staff**

All staff who are required to isolate due to close contact with a positive case are required to isolate for a period of 10 days only.

Staff that are currently already isolating can return to work once they have completed a 10-day isolation period – they do not have to complete a 14-day isolation.

The reduction in the self-isolation period to 10-days also applies to people instructed to quarantine after returning from non-exempt countries.

**Prisoners isolating following contact**

Prisoners who are required to isolate due to close contact with a positive case are required to isolate for a period of 10 days only.

Prisoners that are currently already isolating only have to complete a 10-day isolation period – they do not have to complete a 14-day isolation.

**Prisoners in Reverse Cohorting Units (RCUs)**

Establishments should continue to operate **14-day reverse cohorting** for receptions and transfers in.

This decision has been made because reverse cohorting is our best defence against the seeding of infection into prisons, and isolation in RCUs is for a different purpose than following contact with a positive case.

The only exception to 14-day RCU period is:

* Where RCU testing is in place, establishments can continue to operate the agreed model of RCU reduction i.e. where a prisoner has agreed to be tested and has returned 2 negative tests, they can be moved to the general population after a minimum of seven days in the RCU.

**Next steps**

We have updated the Cohorting and Compartmentalisation Strategy to reflect the above changes and attach it here for your reference. We are also updating the HMPPS Contact Tracing Policy to reflect this position and will issue the revised version tomorrow to Contact Tracing Leads (Friday 18 December). This will include PHE agreement that the appropriate wearing of FRSMs can be treated as a mitigating factor preventing the need for isolation.



Any other document/guidance that refers to the 14-day isolation period following contact should be taken as meaning 10-day isolation from this point forward – we will amend any such references in due course.

The position on the RCU period will be reviewed early in the New Year.

Please direct any queries on this matter to [COVID19.Regimes&OpsGuidance@justice.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19.Regimes&OpsGuidance@justice.gov.uk).

Kind Regards,

Ed

17 December 2020