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|  | **Contact tracing in HMPPS – Notice to Staff** |

As many of you will be aware, a Contact Tracing Lead (CTL) has been appointed in every establishment in England and Wales. This is because prisons and other custodial settings are considered to be “complex settings” for contact tracing purposes due to their unique character and particular challenges. The National Test and Trace system (T&T) designate custodial settings as “Tier 1” where conducting enquiries into the contacts of positive COVID cases is very specific to the circumstances. Having a Tier 1 categorisation confers greater importance because of the recognition of the critical service we provide as key-workers. CTLs are therefore acting as an extension of National T&T and collaborating with Public Health officials.

CTLs have two main responsibilities:

1. Conducting Contact Tracing enquiries and overseeing Contact Tracing record keeping in the prison
2. Being a COVID-19 Measures Champion and promoting COVID controls in the establishment

The aim of those two tasks is to reduce the number of COVID cases in prisons and to help safely manage those that do occur. This can be achieved in ta number of ways: minimising the need for isolation in the first place through raising awareness in their prison of any specific COVID risks and the measures put in place to manage them; ensuring that those who need to isolate due to the exposure to COVID at work do so at the earliest opportunity. The CTLs work is even more important at the present time as cases continue to rise with the emergence of a new variant, and as we have entered another period of national lockdown.

Therefore, all staff members are reminded to play their part and actively contribute to this important work by following the COVID measures that have been introduced as well as positively engaging with the contact tracing process where it is triggered in your establishment. To help you to do that, please be aware of the following:

* Your establishment’s Contact Tracing Lead conducts a risk screening of all workplace-related contacts should a staff member or prisoner test positive. This means that NHS T&T does not need to inquire about workplace contacts of a positive HMPPS case where a CTL is appointed. CTLs are responsible for doing so and you should cooperate with them as you would with NHS T&T.
* This risk screening will determine whether contact has taken place and consider whether any mitigating factors exist to reduce the risk. Where close contact appears to have taken place without mitigating factors, the individual needs to isolate, however where there is evidence that the contact risk may be reduced, the CTL will determine that isolation is not required. This process is guided by Public Health principles and is supported by Public Health officials.
* If you have tested positive (either through prison or community testing) and you are in contact with the community T&T (that will still manage your community contacts outside of work), you should inform them that you work in a “Tier 1” setting – i.e. a prison, and this should stop the community enquiry from needing to look at workplace contacts.
* If you have tested positive but not through the prison testing system, please let your establishment know as early as possible so contact tracing can start in your workplace as early as possible.
* Regardless of how you tested positive, please cooperate with CTLs and fully answer their questions in regards to workplace related question
* Beware that you **have to isolate if you are told to do so by a CTL. This has the same status as the isolation introduced by NHS T&T. This means you should stay at home for 10 days from the day of the close contact determined by a CTL.**
* Similarly, if you are advised that you do not need to isolate following a close contact with a positive colleague or prisoner, you are expected to go back to work.
* If you do not agree with the isolation decision, you can raise this with your Governor/Director or local Trade Union representative who can escalate it further if necessary.
* Please note that CTLs do not conduct contact tracing enquiries on symptomatic individuals – it is a confirmed positive test that triggers an inquiry. CTLs can however sometimes initiate a pre-assessment where a positive test appears likely.
* If you are wearing an FRSM appropriately (in line with Safe or Local operating procedures and having has PPE awareness training) then you do not normally need to isolate after having contact with a positive case. Your CTL will be able to determine this based on the specific circumstances.

Thank you very much for your ongoing hard work and following those procedures to make sure you continue to protect yourself and your colleagues.

HMPPS COVID-19 GOLD COMMAND

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