**03.02.21 - Reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission during prisoner transfer.**

Recent reports have highlighted cases across the estate where prisoners have become symptomatic for COVID-19 following transfer. Establishments have highlighted concerns around the mitigations in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when facilitating prisoner transfers around the estate. It is essential that we continue to operate transfers during this heightened period of risk in order to allow us to continue serving the courts, but we must be cautious that this does not increase COVID-19 risk for receiving establishments. The purpose of this briefing is therefore to highlight the protective measures that should be taken by both sending and receiving establishments when facilitating transfers.

**Health Screenings prior to transfer-** All prisoners approved for transfer must be seen by a healthcare practitioner prior to discharge and declared ‘fit to transfer’ in the usual way. The healthcare staff at the sending establishment must communicate all pertinent risk information to their counterparts at the receiving establishment at the point the transfer is discharged. Prisoners should not be transferred whilst symptomatic/positive for COVID-19.

**Utilisation of available testing –** Where possible, establishments and PMU should seek to transfer prisoners from reception prisons into the training estate directly following the initial RCU period and reception testing to further reduce the risk of transferring COVID-19 across the estate. Transfer immediately following a 14 day RCU period or receipt of 2 negative tests within a period at least 7 days increases our degree of certainty around an individual being COVID-free, however all other COVID control would still need to be adhered to in this instance. All establishments should continue to record on case notes when an individual has been discharged from the RCU following 2 negative tests.

**Reverse Cohorting –** Reverse cohorting requirements continue to be governed by the HMPPS Cohorting and Compartmentalisation strategy, accessible at: <https://hmppsintranet.org.uk/ersd-guidance/2020/04/15/cohorting-and-population-management/>. The current national restrictions mean that all establishments are currently RAG rated RED, meaning that 14 day reverse cohorting (reduced to 7 days where testing is in place as per strategy) following transfer continues to be compulsory estate-wide. This continues to be our best defence against the seeing of infection in to the wider prison population, and it is important that all relevant guidance continues to be adhered to.

Where a prisoner arrives at a retrieving site and is symptomatic for COVID-19, they should immediately be placed into protective isolation as per existing policy, and the sending site should be immediately informed.

**Face Coverings -** As per the HMPPS Prisoner Face Covering strategy, all prisoners are required to wear Face Coverings when residing on the RCU. This is to further mitigate any potential spread of COVID-19 within the population in this area.

**Contact tracing requirements –** In the even that a prisoner became symptomatic following transfer, the Contact Tracing Lead (CTL) at the receiving establishment is responsible for informing the sending establishment of the case such that contact tracing enquires can be made by the sending site CTL. The CTL at the receiving site would then be responsible for enquires at the receiving site as per policy.

**Social Distancing and Hygiene** – Maintaining 2m distance between all individuals wherever possible continues to be the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All efforts should be made to maintain distance between all staff and prisoners during the process of transfer. Where 2m distance cannot be maintained, any relevant PPE requirements must be adhered to, and regular hand washing should occur.

Please direct any further queries on this matter to: COVID19.Regimes&OpsGuidance@justice.gov.uk.