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| Ministry of Justice |  |
| The Right Honourable  Robert Buckland QC MP  Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice |
| **Steve Gillan, General Secretary POA**  Cronin House  245 Church Street  London  N9 9HW | **MoJ ref:** [MC123456]  February 2021 |

**COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN PRISONS**

Dear Steve,

Following our recent meeting on the 28 January 2021, I wanted to take the opportunity to reiterate my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the hidden heroes working within our prison service for their continuing hard work, dedication and professionalism as they deliver an outstanding response to the COVID-19 pandemic alongside the healthcare teams working in our prisons. I also wish to further emphasise my full appreciation for the constructive way the POA has engaged with the HMPPS response throughout.

When we met, you queried whether any ‘spare’ doses of the COVID-19 vaccine could be administered to prison staff. The vaccine delivery programme in prisons is led by NHS England, and by the Welsh Government and Local Health Boards in Wales. The roll out of the vaccine in prisons is following the same prioritisation and timeline as the wider community programme, as set out in the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisations (JCVI) Priority Groups. Individuals in groups 2-4 are currently eligible; prison residents are being offered the vaccine in custody, and eligible staff will be invited to receive the vaccine in the community. This will remain the case when the vaccination programme progresses to groups 5-9.

The supply of vaccines is being carefully managed to avoid unused doses and these will therefore be very limited in number, if any, once eligible prisoners have been vaccinated. However, it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent doses that would otherwise be spoilt going to waste. Should this situation arise, in line with the policy in the community, doses will be given to healthcare professionals (JCVI Priority Group 1) who have not yet received their first dose, and then to prison staff who work closely with healthcare colleagues to enable the delivery of healthcare. NHS England is communicating this position to prison healthcare teams, and HMPPS will help to facilitate the application of this NHS policy, to minimise wasted doses. We are also with working with colleagues in Wales to ensure a similar approach is taken there.

As we discussed, both Minister Frazer and I believe there is a strong case for prison staff to be prioritised for access to the vaccine in the next phase of the rollout, after priority groups 1-9. We continue to work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to make this case.

RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP