



**The Professional Trades Union for Prison,
Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers**

National Chair: Mark Fairhurst
General Secretary: Steve Gillan

Headquarters:
Cronin House
245 Church St.
Edmonton
London N9 9HW
t. 020 8803 0255
f. 020 8803 1761
e. general@poauk.org.uk
w. www.poauk.org.uk

North Regional Office
1 Linden House
Sardinia St.
Leeds
LS10 1BH

t. 01132 428833
f. 01132 429075
e. adminnro@poauk.org.uk

Northern Ireland
Castell House
116 Ballywalter Rd.
Millisle Co Down
BT22 2HS

t. 02891 861928
f. 02891 861839
e. adminni@poauk.org.uk

Scotland
21 Calder Rd.
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH11 3PF

t. 0131 443 8105
f. 0131 444 0657
e. adminscot@poauk.org.uk

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Dear Colleagues

HMPPS AND POA JOINT STATEMENT- CONTACT TRACING IN HMPPS

Please find enclosed Joint Statement between POA/HMPPS regarding the above.

Yours sincerely

STEVE GILLAN
General Secretary

Yours sincerely

MARK FAIRHURST
National Chair

ENCLOSURE

Contact tracing in HMPPS – Joint Statement



HM Prison &
Probation Service



This is an update for POA members on contact tracing in prisons prepared jointly by HMPPS and POA NEC.

POA, HMPPS and Public Health have agreed a robust model for contact tracing in prisons. This has been a significant investment that has seen a Contact Tracing Lead (CTL) 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 NHS Test and Trace system (T&T) considers our establishments to be “Complex Tier 1” settings where conducting enquiries into the contacts of positive COVID cases is very specific to the circumstances.

Having a Complex Tier 1 categorisation confers greater importance because it recognises the critical service we provide as key workers. CTLs are therefore acting as an extension of NHS T&T and collaborating with Public Health officials. This is to ensure that those of you who are at risk of catching the virus due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive case isolate promptly, and those who haven't been in close contact or where the contact was effectively mitigated by the use of PPE, Social Distancing and other control measures, can safely continue with their vital work.

We note that the HMPPS's model is now being replicated in other emergency services, including the Police. However, for the model to be most effective, we would like to provide all POA members and other staff with some important information about how CTLs operate and ask colleagues to recognise that some of the CTLs will also be POA members.

We believe that this will help you to engage with your CTLs in the most productive way and be active participants in managing COVID-19 at your sites, thereby protecting yourselves, your colleagues, and families.

CTLs have two main responsibilities:

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

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 a 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 safety measures put in place to manage them; ensuring that those who do need to isolate due to exposure to COVID at work, do so at the earliest opportunity. The CTLs role is even more important

at the present time as cases have continued to rise with the emergence of a new variant, and as we remain in 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:

- The Contact Tracing Lead at your prison will conduct 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 will need to isolate. However, where there is evidence that the contact risk has been reduced by mitigating factors, the CTL can 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 NHS 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 NHS 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.
- Community contacts will be managed in line with current NHST&T practice / legislation, and where a community-based contact occurs you remain obliged to self-isolate for 10 days if instructed to do so by NHS T&T.
- Regardless of how you tested positive, please cooperate with CTLs and fully answer their questions in regard to workplace related questions.
- Be aware that you have to isolate if you are told to do so by a CTL (in relation to any workplace contact) or NHS Test & Trace (in relation to any community contact). This means you should stay at home for 10 days from the day of the close contact determined by your CTL or NHS Test and Trace.
- 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 appeal 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.
- Please follow all SOPs, wear PPE appropriately and follow any other measures that have been put in place. If you wear your FRSM correctly you will not normally have to self-isolate. Your CTL will be able to determine whether you need to isolate or not, based on the specific circumstances.

The POA have requested assurances from HMPPS that as the CTL program evolves and develops, that regular assurance will be forthcoming to evidence if this model is having a positive effect in reducing the spread of Covid.

Thank you very much for your ongoing hard work and for your co-operation within these procedures to make sure you continue to protect yourself, your colleagues and your families.

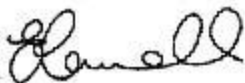


MARK FAIRHURST
POA National Chair



STEVE GILLAN
POA General Secretary

HMPPS



ED CORNMELL
HMPPS Prison Gold Commander

February 2021