**Notice to Prisoners**

Yesterday evening (5 July 2021), the Prime Minister updated the country on what is being done in England so that restrictions in the community can stop on July 19th

The changes announced are for England only and we expect the First Minister of Wales to give an update on the 15 July.

The Prime Minister also said that the pandemic was not over because we are seeing cases rise in the community. He said that we will see more cases in the community and more deaths as things start to open up again. He also said we need to be prepared to reintroduce some measures in the winter.

I wanted to write and tell you what this means for us in prison. Like the community, we are starting to see rises in cases in prison each day which we must continue to lift our own restrictions carefully and safely.

Public Health experts have told us that prisons are more likely to suffer from longer outbreaks of infection because we all live and work so closely together. I know that I have told you this many times but I think it is important that we keep remembering we are all following the health advice on how to keep us safe.

Keeping everyone in our prison safe from this virus is my number one priority and we must not do anything now that could threaten the progress we have made so far, however tempting.

However, I do want to reassure you that we will be progressing with our regimes, even though we must do it at a slower pace than the community. There are already 13 prisons which are now running regimes with far less COVID restrictions and I know there are many more getting ready to move to that next stage.

One of the main areas we are focused on is improving visits for you. We recently completed a pilot across a selection of prisons that allowed for physical contact during visits following a negative COVID test result. We are currently looking at these results and I will update you on how we will use these results to imprive visits soon.

PLEASE INCLUDE LOCAL DETAILS OF YOUR REGIME PROGRESSSION

You can help keep this prison safe from COVID and reduce the risk of returning to a more restricted regime in the future by getting vaccinated. Health experts have said that this is the best way we can manage COVID.

We have already given a first dose of the vaccine to 42,500 people in prison and 21,000 are now fully vaccinated.

If you have not had your vaccine yet I would encourage you to do so. If you aren’t sure about having it you can speak to your key worker who will listen to your concerns and answer your questions. You can also speak to someone in health or perhaps a peer mentor or religious leader.

Living with COVID, and understand how we respond to new cases in the future, is going to be a new experience for all of us. We must continue to protect ourselves and each other by making sure we keep following the public health measures such as maintaining social distancing and wearing a face covering.

I know this must feel frustrating when the wider community is moving so much quicker than us, but we are moving forwards, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Thank you for your patience.