**Gold Brief - Refreshments in Visits Halls (30.07.21)**

**Purpose**

Further to the Gold Briefing issued on Friday 16th July ‘Social Visits: Testing for Physical Contact and Refreshments’ this note provides additional guidance on the resumption of refreshments in visit halls during social visits.

**Summary**

On 17 May Ministers gave permission for the gateway to be opened to allow establishment to progress to Stage 2 of the national framework for recovery. Since that decision we have seen a gradual increase in the number of sites approved to deliver Stage 2 regimes.

We can now announce that those prisons that have:

1. Implemented Stage 2 regimes **AND**
2. Have social visits testing protocols in place can begin to resume refreshment services in visits halls.

This is in keeping with what is now available in the community.

Prisons that plan to reintroduce refreshments will be required to review their existing social visits workplace risk assessment and local operating procedure (LOP). This must be done in consultation with local stakeholders including Trade Unions and Family Services Providers.

In order to maintain the safety of visitors, prisoners and staff, COVID control mitigation procedures must be in place.

As a minimum, these procedures must include:

* Testing of visitors prior to social visits. Where possible, prisoners should also be tested on the day of/day before social visits as best practice. Only those who agree to test and return a negative test are able to access refreshments.
* Social visits to continue to operate with a reduced capacity to enable social distancing between visiting bubbles
* Face coverings required by prisoners and visitors, unless food and/or drink is being consumed.
* Refreshments provided via table service only. Food and drinks will be delivered directly to the table, to prevent queues and the close contact of people from different bubbles at refreshment stations.
* People serving refreshments must wear a face covering.
* Hand hygiene protocols in place for prison staff, prisoners, visitors and those serving refreshments
* Appropriate food hygiene and infection prevention and control hygiene training for those preparing refreshments
* Thorough cleaning of tables and equipment and waste disposal to take place after every use
* Where possible, pre-order and pre-payment of refreshments should be taken in the visit centre prior to social visits commencing.
* Use of card payments will be encouraged wherever possible to avoid handling of cash
* Use of single use, disposable plates, cups and cutlery. Where possible, sites are asked to consider usage of recyclable materials.

Establishments should work closely with external partners who provide refreshment services to ensure that these mitigations are in place before refreshment services are re-introduced. Establishments should also recognise that it may take some time for Family Service Providers to fully mobilise and return to full staffing/service levels given the challenges Covid has presented to them and the need for them to recover.

Operational Guidance on the testing programmes that need to be set up in order to satisfy the eligibility requirement for refreshments programmes is available here: (<https://hmppsintranet.org.uk/ersd-guidance/2020/04/28/staff-testing-in-england/>

Please direct any queries to COVID19.RegimesOpsGuidance1@justice.gov.uk in the first instance.