**What is a stage one regime?**

Stage one is the regime that operates at the last stage of the National Framework for Prison Recovery and is our first step to reform. Stage one prisons are at the stage in their recovery where they can deliver a meaningful, decent, safe and full regime. Some COVID-prevention measures may need to remain in place due to the high-risk environment of prisons. This may be the case even after the restrictions have eased in the community but we will always work with public health authorities.

**How does this fit into the overall COVID recovery plan?**

During COVID, the National Framework for Prisons Recovery was created to outline how prisons would respond to COVID. The Framework had five stages that prisons would move through as they responded to COVID. During periods of significant restrictions, prisons operated at a stage four regime and progressed through the stages depending on the COVID outbreaks nationally and within the individual prisons.

**Does this mean COVID restrictions will stay in place during a stage one regime?**

There may be some measures we need to keep in place but they will not have the same level of impact as they have done during the height of the pandemic. This is because prisons are higher risk environments and we are following the public health advice on how to prevent outbreaks.

The regimes at stage one will be significantly less restrictive and provide far more opportunity to return to work, education, offending behaviour programmes and other activities.

**So how is a stage one regime different from pre-COVID regimes?**

While COVID restrictions posed significant challenges to prisons, it also taught us a lot about what we can do to make our prisons safer for staff and prisoners. We want to use what we have learnt in the last 18 months and what we already knew works well to begin reforming our regimes.

This includes reviewing group size, movement around the prison, how activities are run and how prisoners spend their time on their wing. These are all elements which could look different in a stage one regime.

You may feel at this stage that the changes aren’t significant but a stage one regime will provide us with a safe foundation as we move out of COVID recovery. We can then use this foundation to make larger changes as part of longer-term Prison Reform.

**What is going to change in my prison?**

While there will be a national set of expectations, prisons will make their own local plans for a stage one regime using a newly created Regime Review Tool. The Regime Review Tool will include risk assessments based on local prison data which is routinely captured, for example around safety, as well as our learning from COVID around themes such as group size. This will enable governors to build a regime which best suits their prison’s needs and offers the best outcomes for reducing reoffending.

This means that stage one regimes will look different depending on the prison. For example, a stage one regime in a women’s prison or an open prison will take their unique needs into account particularly around safety for women.

The outcome for each prison will be to design a regime of **time well spent** which gives greater structure and a broader range of purposeful activities which support prisoners to progress through their sentence and lead a crime-free life on release.

Since February 2021, governors, staff, partners, stakeholders and prisoners have been briefed about plans the stage one regimes as part of our ongoing conversations about recovery. The models for each prison function (reception/local, training, resettlement (closed and open) youth, and women have been designed by governors to make sure they meet the priority needs in that area.

**Why are we doing this now?**

COVID has provided us with a unique opportunity to look at what we do and how we do it because of the length of time we have had to restrict normal activity. While we do not underestimate how difficult restrictions and lockdowns have been, this does provide us with the opportunity to do things differently as we reintroduce elements of our regimes.

Many different organisations across the world are using this opportunity to do things differently – it is not just the prison service.

**How do you know that this is the right thing to do?**

During the last 18 months, staff, governors and prisoners have shared their views on the impact COVID restrictions has had on them. While there have obviously been negative experiences, there has also been clear and consistent feedback that some elements have been beneficial, particularly in the male estate.

We have also spoken to a significant number of stakeholders including HMIP, PPO and our partners and providers to get their views. We have also regularly engaged with our recognised trade unions, who represent not just prison officers but all staff who work in our prisons.

We have used this feedback as well as our pre-COVID learnings to understand what we can improve in our prisons now and how this will enable us to build on wider reforms in the future

We will regularly review how stage one regimes are running and make appropriate changes where needed.

**How will this reduce reoffending?**

Creating regimes which enable a more targeted focus on what a prisoner needs to do to progress through their sentence will better prepare them for a crime free life on release.

**How will this make our prisons safer?**

Prisons will use the Regime Review Tool to assess all parts of the regime in preparation for a stage one regime, using existing data about their prisons and COVID learning. This will enable them to run a full regime which is safe as well as decent and meaningful.

**Does this mean we will change how education and work is provided in prison?**

We will not be making any changes to current contracts. We know our providers and partners have also learnt a lot during COVID and governors will be working with all parts of their prison when they design their stage one regime.

Stage one will give us the flexibility to improve on participation and engagement rates on services our providers run.

**How does this project fit in with Prison Reform?**

Stage one forms part of the National Framework for Prison Recovery and is part of our response to COVID. It provides a safe foundation to move to more ambitious changes as part of the longer term Prison Reform programme.

The aim of longer-term regime reforms is to build safe, meaningful and fair regimes that provide activities, work, education and programmes which best prepare prisoners for a crime-free life on release.