**Gold Briefing – Opening of the Stage 1 Gateway (05.08.21)**

**Purpose**

On 29th July the Stage 1 Model, Progression mechanics and SOP were published. They continue to be accessible [here](https://hmppsintranet.org.uk/ersd-guidance/stage-1/).

Since this briefing was issued, we have received formal agreement from the Minister to open the Stage 1 Gateway. The purpose of this briefing is to provide further information to establishments about the Gateway opening and the implications of this for progression through the National Framework.

**Stage 1 Gateway**

As per the Prisons National Framework (published in June 2020), at each stage it has been required for the Ministers to make a ‘gateway’ decision at a national level, on the principle of whether prisons assessed as suitable may be permitted to progress to the next Stage of opening the regime.

The Framework outlines the conditions for progression to each regime stage. When the National Framework was written, there was no vaccine for Covid-19 available and so the only way to deliver safe regimes at Stage 1 would be the absence of known infections.

We don’t currently have that, but what we do now have is an effective and widely available vaccine. This means, where local conditions are met (e.g. Heat Map panel Green rating), we are able to safely progress regimes to Stage 1.

We have ministerial agreement to make a small update the National Framework conditions to reflect this and the difference vaccinations now make. We will engage with key stakeholders such as trade unions separately as we plan to make this update.

While this update is underway, we will support those establishments that are ready and meet the necessary requirements to progress to Stage 1. This process will include key engagement with local trade union branches/representatives and public health officials as set out in the Stage 1 Briefing linked above.

Therefore, as of 5th August 2021, the **Stage 1 Gateway is now open.**  Establishments are able to continue the process of planning their Stage 1 regimes, consulting with stakeholders and preparing for the process of applying to formally progress to Stage 1.

In light of the current infection rates we do not expect to see large numbers of establishments to progress Stage 1 straight away, and it is expected that progression to Stage 1 will be a process that extends into the Autumn/Winter period. The opening of the gateway does not signify an expectation that all sites must prepare to progress straight away, but rather allows sites who are ready to begin their preparations and engagements with relevant stakeholders.

For any queries about the opening of the gateway or stage 1 in general, please contact COVID19.RegimesOpsGuidance1@justice.gov.uk in the first instance.