**Gold Briefing – Changes to Self-Isolation Guidance for Staff and Prisoners in Wales (29.10.21)**

Dear Prison Group Directors, Directors, Governors,

Please note the below briefing in relation to today’s (29.10) changes in the self-isolation guidance in Wales.

This guidance applies **only** in Wales (including staff working in English prisons but living in Wales). Separate protocols are in place for England.

*Relevant on Friday 29.10.21 only: Where possible, establishments are advised to allow any staff living in Wales  and reporting that they should be isolating in light of the changes introduced today, to go home and isolate as soon as reasonably possible.*

Kind Regards,

Stephen O’Connell

**Purpose**

This briefing has been created to inform establishments in Wales as well as staff working in English prisons but living in Wales about the impact of the announcement from the Welsh Government in relation to changes in the isolation guidance.

**The content of the Welsh Government’s announcement**

*(more information can be found here:* [*https://gov.wales/self-isolation*](https://gov.wales/self-isolation) *)*

In his announcement, First Minister stated that as cases continue to rise, the cabinet has decided to strengthen a number of measures and will consider re-introducing more restrictions at the next review and raising the alert level. The alert level has not been changed from alert level zero during this review.

First Minister urged all employers to help more people to work from home over the next three weeks where this is possible.

In summary, following the most recent Covid rules review in Wales, changes are being made to self-isolation rules. Until now, any fully vaccinated person in a household with someone who tests positive or has symptoms, did not need to self-isolate unless they had symptoms or a positive test themselves.

The new Welsh Government guidance now states that adults who are fully vaccinated and children and young people aged five to 17 should self-isolate until they have received a negative PCR test if someone in their household has symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19.

Therefore, if someone in the household tests positive or has symptoms, other members of the household will also need to self-isolate until they have taken a PCR test. If that test is negative they no longer have to isolate. People will also need to isolate while they await their test appointment and result.

People who are not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated  will still have to self-isolate for 10 days following contact with someone who has tested positive, including close contacts in and outside of their household.

There is no change to rules in relation to community contacts (outside of households) for fully vaccinated individuals.

**What does this mean for HMPPS sites, staff and prisoners**

Staff

Staff will have to follow the guidance described above. This means that the only change is that household contacts of a positive or symptomatic case will have to isolate until they receive a negative PCR test. Staff can get the PCR test at the earliest opportunity using the NHS testing system.

Fully vaccinated staff who refuse/can’t take a PCR test will have to self-isolate for 10 days (i.e. as if they weren’t vaccinated).

In general, all probation and prison staff who can work from home are encouraged to do so for the next three weeks. However, those who need to attend their workplace should continue to do so.

The Risk Mitigation Testing (RMT) model can still be applied to fully vaccinated individuals who are household contacts of a positive case, however they will be required to isolate until the result of the PCR test is known before returning to work

Prisoners

Prisoners have to isolate already following a close contact with a case and take a PCR test, even if they are fully vaccinated. This means there is currently no change to the guidance and Prisoner Risk Mitigation Testing (PRMT) is still available to fully vaccinated prisoners .

**Other information**

As explained in the GOLD brief on 20.08.21, Risk Mitigation Testing (RMT) has been implemented to mitigate against the risk of transmission of the virus into these settings whilst allowing staff to return to work following a close contact with a case.

Please note that the only change to the Risk Mitigation Testing (RMT) will be that, in cases of household contact, where PCR test was previously strongly advised, it will now be compulsory and staff cannot attend work until they have received a confirmation their test result is negative. This is to comply with a wider change described above.