

OUR REF: KD/KE/DF/Covid

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Letter sent to: -

Jo Farrar
Michelle Jarman-Howe
Amy Rees
Phil Copple

Health and Justice Commissioning
NHS England and Improvement
Birch House
Southwell Road West
Rainworth
Notts. NG21 0HJ
0113 8248990

kate.davies12@nhs.net

Dear Colleagues,

RE: Important information about new COVID-19 treatments and access for prisoners

I am writing to you to let you know about and ask for your help in enabling prisoners to access new COVID treatments. These treatments are now available on the NHS for the highest risk non-hospitalised patients with COVID. The medicines may prevent hospitalisation and death in some of your population. The treatments include neutralising monoclonal antibodies (nMABS) and antivirals. The UK four nations have published a clinical policy which describes eligibility for this cohort of patients.

How will patients receive treatment?

Each integrated care system (ICSs) across the NHS regions has established one or more local Coronavirus Medicine Delivery Units (CMDU) to roll out nMABS or antivirals as a treatment for eligible patients with COVID-19. The majority of CMDUs are based in hospital settings and the nMAB is an intravenous injection that is administered over several hours.

Healthcare teams in partnership with prison Governors in the detained estate will need to enable access to these treatments via the local CMDU for eligible patients in prisons. Referral and treatment pathways will need to be agreed in advance for potentially eligible individuals within secure or detained settings falling within the CMDU's catchment area. The health and justice commissioners have already been working with their local CMDU leads to plan the pathway for eligible people in the detained setting. The plan is that the CMDU services **will launch on 16th December** with patient communications commencing on the 18th.

The treatment **must be given within 7 days of symptom onset** so prompt referral and transfer to a CMDU is essential to maximise the uptake and outcomes of these treatments.

The pathway for access is summarised as follows:

1. Prisoners who meet the clinical eligibility for the treatment will have their clinical record flagged by the prison healthcare team. The process ensures that new admissions are identified and clinicians at the prison can flag patients they identify as being eligible if the routine cohort process misses them.
2. Eligible patients will be given a letter about the treatment and actions they need to take.
3. If a patient who is flagged as eligible for the treatment **has a COVID PCR positive test**, healthcare will refer the patient (with their consent) to the CMDU team.



4. A clinician from the CMDU will complete a **telephone-based clinical assessment** of the patient. This means the health care and HMPPS teams need to facilitate this for the patient taking account of their positive COVID infection status.
5. If the assessment outcome is that the patient needs the treatment, **the patient will need to be transferred to the CMDU** to receive it using HMPPS transport of COVID positive patient processes, and return them to the prison when the treatment is completed. Transport of the patient by ambulance is not possible.
6. There may be a handful of CMDU services that provide the treatment in a person's home and in these models, the CDU team will need to come into the prison to treat an eligible patient on-site. Collaboration with prison Governors is essential for this to be facilitated.
7. For some patients, nMAB will be clinically contra-indicated and the clinician may decide that the patient can have an oral antiviral. If this happens, the antiviral will be prescribed and delivered to the prison and will be supplied in-possession to the patient in line with local procedures.

Our **current working estimate** of clinically eligible prisoners across England is 2000 patients. To operationalise the access to treatment for eligible prisoners at all prisons, we need your support to communicate this information to your HMPPS teams. Their co-operation is essential to enable the telephone assessments and transporting of patients as an urgent medical transfer to the CMDU (or facilitate clearance for in-reach teams).

Many thanks to all for your continued partnership work in busy times and please do not hesitate to contact myself or anyone in the team to discuss any matters further.

Yours sincerely



Kate Davies CBE
Director of Health & Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services
Commissioning