 

**PROBATION GOLD COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

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| **Issued by:** | **Steve McGuigan** |
| **Date:** | **23 Feb 2022** |
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| **Action required:** | **For Cascade all Staff** |

The Prime Minister has announced plans for removing the remaining legal restrictions while protecting people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and maintaining resilience. You can [read full details on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19). This does not impact [restrictions in place in Wales](https://gov.wales/coronavirus) which remain in place until at least 3 March.

Yesterday’s announcement includes that **from Thursday 24 February the legal requirement to isolate following a positive test will be removed.** Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least five full days and to follow the guidance until they have received two negative test results on consecutive days.

These changes removing the legal requirement to self-isolate will apply to all Probation staff working in community-based operations including sentence management, Community Payback and Accredited Programme delivery. This relaxation of restrictions also applies to all headquarters staff.

For community-based staff visiting prisons and Approved Premises it should be noted that these establishments fall under the category of vulnerable settings which, as stated by the Prime Minister, will receive bespoke guidance following yesterday’s announcement. This guidance will provide prisons and approved premises with more specific advice about what measures they may wish to continue. Please check in advance of your visit what measures (such as mandatory testing) remain in place and comply as required.

We have already written to residents in Approved Premises about the changes and the requirement upon them to continue to abide by the rules which they signed as part of their induction.

Our usual sickness absence policy remains in place and staff should contact their line manager in the first instance if they are unwell. Whilst the removal of restrictions is a positive step, we must remain cautious and so the expectation is that masks should continue to be worn in accordance with local General Risk assessments (GRA).

COVID-19 will be a feature of our lives for the foreseeable future, so we need to learn to live with it and manage the risk to ourselves and others. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result should stay at home, speak to their line manager and self-isolate immediately. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible, even if you’ve had one or more doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

We are also aware that the eventual removal of free and mandatory testing provisions may raise a concern about how tests for staff will be sourced and paid for in some circumstances. Further guidance on this will be issued shortly.

Many thanks