**Notice to Staff**

Dear Colleague,

As you will know, from Friday 1st April regular COVID testing of people in the wider community will come to an end and you will no longer be able to access testing kits for free outside of the workplace. This is part of the Government’s plans to move forward from the pandemic and start to live with COVID.

As a result of this change, from 1st April we will no longer require people coming into this prison for a social visit with a prisoner to take a COVID test beforehand. However, if there is an outbreak, or we receive public health advice about a change in risk of infection we may bring testing before visits back again for a short time to protect everyone.

As the number of COVID infections in the community are still quite high, we have to keep the other measures we have in place to keep everyone safe during visits such as social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing. With this in mind, we will be encouraging visitors to still take a test before they come to the prison to help us to minimise the risk of further infections coming in, but they no longer have to do this as a requirement of entry.

If anyone booked to come on the visit does have symptoms they will be asked not to attend the prison for their visits. We will also be asking visitors not to come to the prison if they have recently been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID.

If they take a test and it gives a positive result, they will not be allowed to come in for their visit in order to protect the health of everyone else living and working here.

If a visit does need to be cancelled for any of these reasons, I would encourage you to support the prisoner to book an alternative method of contact such as a secure video call, phone call or email until the visit can be re-scheduled. Any visits that can’t take place will be re-booked at the earliest opportunity.

We are currently considering our longer-term plans for staff testing as a result of the move away from routine testing in the community, but we still intend to use testing as one of our tools in prisons to protect the most vulnerable.

With regards to staff testing, the use of PCR testing will come to an end on the 31st March, but I strongly encourage you to continue with the regular asymptomatic testing using Lateral Flow tests which are still available.

I will update you on the longer-term testing strategy and plans for lifting the restrictions to regimes in due course.

Thank you for your continued support.

The Governor