**Visits Testing Change Outline for Prisons from 1st April 2022**

This change outline focuses on the testing requirement for social visits. We have sought ministerial views on HMPPS’s ongoing testing strategy (including the routine testing of staff), and we are currently working through what this means and considering how this can be delivered within the operational context. We will issue further guidance on the future testing programme in the next couple of weeks. However, from 1st April asymptomatic testing in the wider community will end in England and from 28th March self-isolation will no longer be a legal requirement in Wales- which impacts social visitors to prisons who, until now, may have been accessing tests for Covid-19 in the community in order to take a test ahead of a social visit.

**The requirement for visitors to test prior to social visits in prisons in England and Wales will cease from 1st April, and it will no longer be necessary for prisoners to be offered a pre-visit test**.

Communications to this effect will be provided to support you in sharing this change with staff and prisoners. Additionally, family service providers will be briefed to pass this information on to visitors.

However, prisons will need to consider the below:

* Where possible, visitors can be encouraged to take a test before travelling to the prison to minimise the risk of spreading infection, but testing is not a requirement to visit
* If the visitor tests for any reason and the result is positive, the visitor should not attend the prison as the visit will not go ahead in the interests of public health
* Visitors will be reminded of the need to take personal responsibility as per the Government advice to the wider community and will be asked to contribute to the ongoing effort to reduce transmission into prisons by not attending the prison in these circumstances:
  + if they suspect they have been in recent contact with someone who has Covid 19 or
  + if they have Covid 19 symptoms or
  + if they have recently tested positive for Covid 19
* Visitors will be reminded that there are [other options](https://www.gov.uk/staying-in-touch-with-someone-in-prison) available for prisoner contact in any of the above circumstances (e.g. secure social video calls) and that any affected Visiting Orders will be reissued
* Outbreak Control Teams may consider whether to make the recommendation to introduce visits testing for prisoners and visitors as an additional safeguard where appropriate during an outbreak. If the Governor considers this to be operationally viable, test kits will be supplied at the visits centre- visitors will not be expected to provide their own. Guidance will be made available to support prisons in standing this up and advising visitors in advance. Prisons should contact the [HMPPS Testing Team](mailto:HMPPSTesting@justice.gov.uk) if this is required

**Supporting Materials**

We will provide a communications pack to establishments including:

* Core lines for staff
* Notice to adult prisoners
* Notice to children in custody
* Notice to families

**Further advice**

Consideration is currently being given to when the conditions might be right for exiting the National Framework. However, until that decision has been made and communicated, all establishments should continue to deliver social visits in line with the existing guidance which is summarised below:

**Social Visits Delivery Options**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Delivery Options** | **STAGE 3** | **STAGE 2** | **STAGE 1** |
| Refreshments Available | X | Checkmark with solid fill  **Subject to local risk assessment- table service refreshments are available at stage 2** | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Creche Facility available | X | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Children’s separate play areas available | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Property – available to hand in/send out | X | Checkmark with solid fill\* | Checkmark with solid fill\* |

*\*****Update (since Nov 2021****) Please note that this does not change the national policy position on ‘handing and sending in’, as set out in the Incentives Policy Framework (IPF), which states the general presumption will be that items for prisoners other than books will not be handed in or sent in by their friends or families unless there are exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Governor. Governors also have discretion to allow a one-off parcel of clothing to be handed in or sent in following conviction. Paragraph 5.55 of the IPF explains how unconvicted prisoners are not subject to the same “one-off” parcel restriction nor the “exceptional circumstances” test.”.*

**Social Visits – Controls**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Controls** | **STAGE 3** | **STAGE 2** | **STAGE 1** |
| Social Distancing required | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | N/A |
| COVID Cleaning | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Contact Tracing | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| COVID symptoms check | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Hygiene Provision | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Face Coverings – movements to tables | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Face Coverings – removal whilst eating/drinking only | X | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Face Coverings – removal at table as voluntary | X | X | Checkmark with solid fill |
| Number of Social Visitors limited. | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | X |
| Stage 1 table refers to application at the baseline level. This may change where Stage 1 prisons need to extend controls during an increased risk period. | | | |