

Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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Bulletin 777

23 April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

PGA Update

A brief update on some of the key messages and issues we have been dealing with is the last couple of weeks.

Testing for staff and prisoners

1,600 antigen tests have been carried out on staff since the Easter weekend. The testing is done ideally three days after the start of symptoms and no more than five days. It has an efficacy of 70% accuracy.

There is still no effective antibody test available to see if people have had the virus.

Staff testing positive for Covid-19 has increased to 232 over 54 prisons with 3,600 Public Sector Prison staff isolating. Sadly there have been four confirmed Covid-19 deaths, but this number may increase. A number of staff remain seriously ill. Our sympathies go out to their families, friends and colleagues.

The number of prisoners testing positive for Covid-19 is currently 294, over 65 prisons with 3,200 isolating. Sadly, there have been 15 confirmed Covid-19 deaths, although almost all had serious underlying health conditions. Our sympathies are with those close to them. A number remain seriously ill in hospital.

It is hoped that there will be some research on testing large numbers of staff and prisoners to give a better picture and support the equally challenging recovery phase post Covid-19. This will be an important element of recovery plan.

PHE Modelling in Prisons

Modelling carried in March showed that deaths in prisons from Covid-19 would be over 2,000. Since then, the country shut down along with the ERDP and cohorting arrangements in prisons have shown to be highly effective in managing the outbreak in our prisons. It is expected that the modelling now will show a much smaller numbers of deaths. This is excellent news and the PGA thanks HLT, PHE, HQ, Regional and of course all our Governors and frontline staff for the magnificent job you have done in preserving life, #Hidden Heroes

Stability and Safety

Stability and safety remains good. It is believed that prisoners are accepting of current regimes as it is a global effort to deal with Covid-19. We need to be mindful that as the country relaxes the shutdown, prisons will not necessarily be recovering at the same pace, which may lead to less compliance.

Temporary Accommodation

The PGA has had consultation on the drop-in units and have voiced our concerns. We remain firmly of the opinion that the way to manage Covid-19 effectively is to reduce the population. Releases of low risk offenders would reduce significant crowding and this coupled with the reduction in new receptions and licence recalls due to a sluggish criminal justice system would lower the population. Sadly the ECTR policy is not making any inroads into the population pressures. It is hoped that as it becomes slicker, the numbers will increase, but even so, it is not the answer. To put what has been described to us as festival or contractors' temporary accommodation into prisons is not a viable short, medium or long term solution. We have made our views clear on this issue.

Population Management Strategy

As we have started to do some transfers between Locals and Cat C's we have had some concerns raised by members over cross infection and the ability to deliver RCU's. It is accepted that the pure model as described in the guidance is not possible everywhere. Where you are unable to do this, please document in your decision logs and do the best you can and raise immediately with Silver if you are unable to manage the risk. The population is expected to reduce by 500 each week over the next month. With a further 2,000 reduction in the population, coupled with the other measures, RCU development will become slightly easier. The PGA understands that not all prisons will be able to be fully compliant and Phil Copple is understanding of this.

HMIP Scrutiny Visits

PGA Bulletin 775 published on 9 April was brought to the attention of the Chief Inspector and some changes were made to their plans following this. Information about the visits is published on the Inspectorate website. We would encourage you to read this. Feedback following visits would be appreciated, positive and not so positive. Phil Copple confirmed that neither he nor the Inspectorate require preparatory work by local managers other than normal logistical stuff.

Staffing

There are 400 staff expressing interest in re-joining on temporary contracts.

Recovery

Very early dialogue has begun with HMPPS on recovery from the current ERDP and Covid-19. It is expected to be protracted and challenging. The PGA is clear that what was the norm before, should not return, and the experiences of today should inform the future and be an opportunity to do things differently. Whilst there are many negatives from Covid-19, it seems that there are equally as many positives we can learn from.

Justice Committee Oral Evidence on Older Prisoners

We have been asked to give evidence in May to the Justice Committee. We are not experts in this field, so it would be really helpful if those of you who are make contact with Andrea. We

need to know the good stuff you are doing and the challenges you are facing. Thank you in anticipation.

Finally

We are loving the 15 second dances you are posting on Twitter. If we have missed any then please let us know. You never know, there may be one coming from our Twitter Accounts in the not too distant future!

Keep safe and you are all doing a magnificent job.

Andrea

Andrea Albutt
President