

# Prison Governors Association

Representing: The Prison Governors of the United Kingdom since 1987



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## Bulletin 780

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Dear Colleagues,

### PGA Communications Update

In the same way we finished off our last update, we start this one by again giving our continued support to our members and colleagues across HMPPS during what continues to be the most challenging and difficult of times. We do and will always stand shoulder to shoulder with you, no matter how tough or difficult things may be.

It continues to be clear that the coordinated efforts across HMPPS has proved successful in avoiding what was seen to be an inevitable outcome of large numbers of deaths and unrest when COVID entered our prisons. This has not been the case and we have not seen the level of deaths, illness or unrest that could have been a reality if you and your colleagues had not stood up and worked tirelessly to keep the people in our care safe. We remain proud to be your elected representatives and proud to be part of HMPPS.

In starting this update, it feels right for us to make reference to the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign by people across America and the UK. We publicly, openly and freely state that we give our unconditional support to our BAME members and colleagues and will actively give our support to rid our organisation of any racism, or indeed any form of discrimination. On occasion, we have been at odds with some of the messages and directions that come from our most senior leaders in HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice, but on this we are absolutely on the same page with the both Jo Farrar and Richard Heaton's statements:

*We must both see and call out racism, or indeed any form of discrimination.*

*We - each and every one of us - has this responsibility.*

We are also mindful that for some of our members and colleagues they were keenly awaiting the publication of the Government's report into how BAME people are being negatively impacted by COVID. Let's not beat around the bush, for a number of our colleagues they have been living and working through COVID knowing they may be at greater risk of dying if they become exposed and unwell due to COVID. We continue to raise this with HMPPS and we are looking forward to hearing how we can support our colleagues. Due to our structures, we can't always be with our members face to face, and as our CEO asked, we also ask that you look around you right now and check in with all your colleagues to see if they have been impacted by any of the recent events. We are here to help where we can, let's look out for each other.

## Recovery

As members will be aware, HMPPS have divided its overall recovery planning into five strands and it will be our ongoing commitment to our members to give open feedback in how we believe we are progressing in each of these areas. We have formally written to HMPPS to give our commitment and desire to provide as much support as early as possible in the process. The five areas are:

- Regimes and Services Framework
- Resourcing and Workforce Planning
- Population and Capacity Management
- Effective Central Support
- Stakeholder Management

Our updates or ambitions so far in each of these area are:

### Regimes and Services Framework

We are currently in consultation and working with HMPPS during our recovery planning. This currently involves us contributing and agreeing both the format and content of emergency delivery models (EDMs). Our current aim is to influence HMPPS sufficiently enough so that EDMs are published in a standard format, with enough narrative to describe the operating environment which EDMs are being introduced into. What we would like to avoid for Governors and their teams are EDMs which could either compete for a place in the fiction section of the local library or be shortlisted for a Booker Prize.

What HMPPS have been clear on during our early conversations is that they do not wish to overload governors with pages of unnecessary information. However, the EDMs are likely to be shared externally to the organisation and that it is important that those who may not fully understand our current environment have a fuller picture of the challenges that our members are currently working in. We have accepted that this on balance is a good approach to take but we will push back if we think the content of EDMs are becoming too wordy.

What has become clear from our early conversations is that recovery is going to be slow and steady. The risks to individual establishments and HMPPS as a whole are too great to get recovery wrong. We are aware that a number of observers are using emotive terminology such as 'institutional segregation' and are now being critical of the restrictions being applied to regimes, citing them to be unlawful, unnecessary and damaging. We ask that our colleagues, our members, remain firm in their belief that what they have done over recent months has saved lives and that we should not be rushing to expand regimes until we have EDMs and other governance arrangements in place. You and your teams have done amazing things over the last few months, things we would never normally have considered decent or even safe, but you have saved lives and continue to do so.

We will update the membership as to how our consultation on EDMs develop. We are currently actively engaged with the development of the Visits and Industries / New Futures Network EDMs, and the OMiC EDM is about to commence. We have asked for the current list of proposed EDMs, as it is becoming increasingly clear that there will be crossover between different EDMs.

We have also had a wider discussion of what makes an EDM? A question we asked in addition to the consultation we are having with HMPPS around these models. We are also receiving documents which related to other aspects of COVID recovery from across MoJ and HMPPS. These mainly relate to HR processes where Civil Service-wide instructions or guidance is being issued. We are due to have discussions over the next week to formally highlight our concerns over guidance which gives conflicting and often confusing advice contained within HMPPS policies or HMPPS COVID Guidance. While we accept that this work is well-meaning we are often left feeling that these documents will generate more questions rather than resolving any current concerns or issues. We will again keep members updated on these developments.

#### Resourcing and Workforce Planning

We have yet to have an initial meeting with the lead, but we have made our views clear to HMPPS that in the short term where there are demonstrable increases in work which are clearly attributed to providing a COVID secure environment, we would expect to see an indication of where resources will come from. We have been informed that currently work has been undertaken centrally which may be looking at a resourcing model for HMPPS. We have been clear that we have had previous poor experiences where benchmarking or other standardised approaches to modelling have taken place. Whilst we welcome the message that governors will be allowed the freedom to develop their own responses to EDMs, they must also be adequately resourced if this is to be a successful recovery. We also are pushing to ensure recruitment of prison officers and frontline vacancies are filled and that we must not return to a position where the lack of frontline staff prevents governors from providing decent and predictable regimes.

We have been pleased that establishment SMTs have been supplemented during COVID with the temporary inclusion of colleagues from HQ and other non-establishment roles. We would welcome feedback as to how this has impacted on workload of members during COVID, and some indication if these arrangements are to remain in place during recovery. We have some concern that our members' workload will increase during recovery to the unacceptable levels previously experienced – if you have any feedback you can email the PGA mailbox ([pga@justice.gov.uk](mailto:pga@justice.gov.uk)). We would be grateful for any feedback received.

#### Population and Capacity Management

We have yet to have an initial meeting with the lead, however we remain firm in our belief that in order for our members to continue their success in providing safe and decent regimes, they must be given the building blocks to do this. We welcome some of the short term measures HMPPS are introducing to reduce overcrowding in our prisons. The overcrowding and dilapidation seen in some of our prisons have often received the most criticism from external bodies and stakeholders. Both these areas are things which are normally outside of Governors' direct control and influence. Our initial response will be again to put on record that we need to reduce overcrowding. We need to safeguard spaces already set aside to allow cohorting to take place and this must be seen as a priority. We will work to ensure that our members are not asked to oversee overcrowded prisons which increase the risk of COVID outbreaks as regimes develop.

#### Effective Central Support

While we have an established relationship with the lead of this strand, we have again yet to have a formal introductory meeting. We are aware that establishments cannot function

without effective central support. Traditionally, we have seen this being provided through Headquarters and the various iterations of PGD offices. We have been engaged previously in numerous reviews of HQ functions and look forward to working constructively with this strand of recovery. We have, during COVID, seen benefits of having colleagues within the HQ function that have an understanding of the needs of the frontline, and we have many members who support establishments while in an HQ role. We will report back to members as this project develops.

### **Stakeholder Management**

While we have again not had a formal introductory meeting, it feels like our relationship with the lead is developing through regular contact through attendance at a range of similar meetings. As your NEC, we endeavour to preserve and improve the working lives of our members. We believe that we have been successful in presenting the concerns of our members prior to and during this crisis. We often have to take a pragmatic approach in our negotiations and consultations with HMPPS as we know what limitations are placed on HMPPS. We believe we have rarely been in such a strong position with our employer than we are now in ensuring that the views of prison governors are taken account of. We look forward to continuing this work with HMPPS to ensure that engagement with our stakeholders remain positive and that HMPPS are acknowledged both internally and publicly for what we do.

### **Other Continuing work**

#### **Pay**

The Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) report has now been submitted to Government for their consideration. We reported back at the time of oral evidence that we believed we gave a good account to the review panel. This year's oral evidence was given at the time we had just entered lockdown, and we made clear reference to how we believed the impact of COVID would last well in to next year, and possibly in future years. We asked that the PSPRB took account of the already exceptional demanding work environment that all colleagues across HMPPS operated in prior to COVID, but to also take some account that things would more likely than not become more challenging over the next 12 months and more. We were not wrong! We hope for all our colleagues across HMPPS that our arguments were taken on board and we now wait to see how Government value the work of all our #hiddenheroes

#### **Job Evaluation System (JES) / Operational Manager Workloads**

A meeting is scheduled to take place mid-June in an attempt to progress some of the outstanding issues which are concerned with JES and Operational Manager workload. While not wishing to second guess how the direction of this meeting will take, the events over the last few months can only help to illustrate some of our concerns we have been raising with HMPPS while JES has been in place. We will update members after this meeting has taken place.

#### **Annual Conference 2020**

Our Annual Conference is due to take place on between 13 and 14 October, 2020. We have remained in contact with our contact at the venue, the Radisson Blu East Midlands Airport, which has remained open during COVID, providing accommodation to key workers at East Midlands Airport, the largest freight airport in the UK. At this stage we are keen to keep to the published dates for this year's event. While a lot will be determined by Government guidance

prevailing at the time, we are confident that our relationship with the hotel staff and the layout of the facility will allow us to safely host some type of event.

We have a meeting scheduled early next month to assess our position. We wish to avoid cancelling conference, but clearly the health of delegates and guests is our primary concern and as things become clearer and once a decision has been made we will of course let you know.

In finishing off, we again give our continued commitment to you, and give our assurance that we will support you both in your individual working lives and more widely in promoting the work of prison governors and the challenges we face.

We are all sadly aware that, with the exception of a few long-standing, informed and valued supporters, the work of our members and the teams we lead are often overlooked, unfairly criticised or even worse misrepresented. For us, COVID has demonstrated all of this. We are not the NHS and we would never expect to receive the deserved level of public accolade our NHS 'superstars' receive, but what cannot be right is that the success in our prisons goes unrecognised. We have probably been the most successful part of the public sector in our response to COVID. You and your teams through hard work and diligence have avoided the worst case scenario, yet we are still being criticised for not reopening regimes or for them being too restrictive, and us not being applauded for avoiding a second spike in COVID and keeping people alive. This can't be right, can it?

We have seen some amazing examples of where our members and their teams have gone above and beyond in their service to society. We know of examples where colleagues have been in their prisons every day during COVID, leading their teams from the front. We know of members and their teams putting themselves at personal and professional risk in doing the right thing in keeping the people in our care safe, and alive. We know that our success has been a team effort, and the outcomes for those in our care would have been so much different had the support and guidance from our colleagues across all of HMPPS not been there.

Recovery will be a long and hard slog. We must not rush and jeopardise all that we have achieved over the last months. We are proud to be your elected representatives, keep safe and take care.

**Andrea Albutt**  
**President**

**Carl Davies**  
**National Officer**

**Mitch Albutt**  
**National Officer**