



## The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers

National Chair: Mark Fairhurst  
General Secretary: Steve Gillan

Headquarters:  
Cronin House  
245 Church St.  
Edmonton  
London N9 9HW  
t. 020 8803 0255  
f. 020 8803 1761  
e. [general@poauk.org.uk](mailto:general@poauk.org.uk)  
w. [www.poauk.org.uk](http://www.poauk.org.uk)

North Regional Office  
1 Linden House  
Sardinia St.  
Leeds  
LS10 1BH

t. 01132 428833  
f. 01132 429075  
e. [adminnro@poauk.org.uk](mailto:adminnro@poauk.org.uk)

Northern Ireland  
Castell House  
116 Ballywalter Rd.  
Millisle Co Down  
BT22 2HS

t. 02891 861928  
f. 02891 861839  
e. [adminni@poauk.org.uk](mailto:adminni@poauk.org.uk)

Scotland  
21 Calder Rd.  
Edinburgh  
Scotland  
EH11 3PF

t. 0131 443 8105  
f. 0131 444 0657  
e. [adminscot@poauk.org.uk](mailto:adminscot@poauk.org.uk)

# POA Circular 087/2020

26<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Colleagues

## **NATIONAL CHAIR UPDATE**

### **NEC MEMBER GEOFF WILLETTS**

I wish to place on record my best wishes to Geoff Willetts who has joined the NEC as the Area Representative for the Midlands. All enquiries from Midlands Prisons should be directed to Geoff at [geoff.willetts@poauk.org.uk](mailto:geoff.willetts@poauk.org.uk) or 07494 141743.

## **RECOVERY PLANS**

The National Executive Committee are due to commence consultation with HMPPS about medium term plans to ease restrictions as the peak in COVID cases begins to reduce. This will be done gradually over a prolonged period of time and will involve advice from Public Health England and analysis of COVID trends in geographical areas as well as a consideration of outbreaks and cases within individual prisons. There will be a strict scrutiny and governance procedure in place. Local POA committees will be afforded additional facility time and **will** be involved in formulating and agreeing new Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work. The NEC will be fully involved in these plans and your safety is non-negotiable.

All members should note **there are no changes to the current lock down regimes at all** and any deviations should be reported to your Area NEC Representative immediately. No changes to regimes will take place until the NEC have agreed a way forward. This will take several weeks. **I reiterate again, there are no changes at all to your current regimes.**

## **POA ACCOMMODATION SCHEME**

I am pleased to announce that Center Parcs have agreed that POA members can remain on their sites until Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June. I am pleased that we have been able to support so many members during this time and look forward to a healthy

relationship with Center Parcs in the future. Other major hotels continue to offer POA members accommodation at reduced costs. More details can be obtained on POA Circulars 68 and 70/2020.

### **PP BONUS SCHEME**

There are many rumours in circulation about the PP Bonus scheme that now need to be clarified.

The hours staff have committed to will be honoured. Governors have the option to reduce PP hours weekly in order to have hours in reserve in case of further outbreaks between now and March 2021. If you have signed up to work either 108 hours or 36 hours you will be expected to complete these hours. Your bonus payment will be paid into your salary on time even if you have not completed your committed hours.

PP bonus scheme hours can be used for bed guards and constant watches.

The annual leave buy back scheme is still available and is not being removed. You have until the end of June 2020 to express your interest to the detail manager. After this date it is unlikely you will be allowed to sell annual leave.

There are no plans to approve a further PP Bonus scheme but this cannot be ruled out because we may see a second wave of COVID-19.

### **POA SCOTLAND**

The vacant Chair position is temporarily being occupied by the Vice Chair Jim McCabe until elections can recommence. Our colleagues in Scotland continue to work commendably in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in their Prisons and I thank them for their efforts.

### **NORTHERN IRELAND AREA COMMITTEE**

I would like to thank our colleagues in Northern Ireland for their efforts in containing the spread of Coronavirus in their Prisons. I am aware of the praise they have deservedly been afforded by their CEO Ronnie Armour.

### **SICK LEAVE EXCUSALS**

Following concerns raised by the POA, MOJ HR Services discussed our plans to improve the current sick leave excusal application process. The improvements will speed up the process for employees and Prisons, reduce the potential for errors and delays and the amount of paperwork involved. We await a final agreed version once consultation with other interested parties has concluded.

### **PAY AWARD**

The Pay Review Body has submitted their recommendations to Government. There is due to be an announcement about any pay award in June, although because of COVID this may change.

### **SECURE HOSPITALS**

POA members in the Secure Hospitals continue to perform exemplary duties and report very few cases of COVID-19 amongst their populations. Some sites have implemented virtual visits. Staff are being trained in 'swab' testing for COVID and there are 'test and trace' in place in some settings. This estate continues to adhere to regime restrictions and is stable.

### **PRIVATE SECTOR**

POA full time officials continue to support our Private Sector Colleagues and have ensured that they are benefitting from sufficient PPE and can access their own bespoke PP Bonus Scheme.

### **IN COUNTRY ESCORTS (ICE)**

We continue to support our colleagues who are placed at risk escorting prisoners throughout the country. Our FTO staff have asked employers to provide face masks for all staff and prisoners during escorts as this has proved successful with other escort providers. Certain employers continue to refuse to adopt this practice. We will continue to push this area of good practice.

### **REPLY FROM SECRETARY OF STATE ROBERT BUCKLAND MP QC**

I enclose a copy of the reply from the Secretary of State for Justice in relation to a request from the POA to give parity to frontline staff within our Prisons.

### **LOCAL POA BRANCH OFFICIALS**

Please ensure you recognise your local POA officials for the work they continue to perform on your behalf. They are the backbone of this Union and will be relied on to ensure your safe working practices continue during the recovery phase. I would like to thank you all for the work you do. We are looking at enhancing our communication strategy with you to include digital technology.

### **RETIRED AND HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS**

Our thoughts are with our retired and honorary life members at this difficult time. We are aware that many of our former colleagues are currently shielding at home and are looking after loved ones with health conditions. We remain available for this section of our POA family in their time of need.

As we slowly enter our recovery phase it is important to remember that due to your efforts our Prisons have stabilised with initial modelling predicting over 2700 prisoner deaths. This figure has been revised and has significantly reduced to estimates of below 100. We must not be complacent and must not allow deviations from restrictions unless an agreement is in place and the evidence suggests it is safe to expand regimes.

Ultimately, staff on the frontline in our secure settings have saved lives and you deserve every accolade for doing so. We must not let the evidence sway us from implementing safer regimes that have reduced violence against us and allowed prisoners with complex needs the opportunity to engage with staff and ease their fears.

Returning to chaos is not an option.

Thank you on behalf of the NEC for your continued bravery, professionalism, and commitment on the frontline. We remain available for you all whenever you may need us.

To you and your families I wish you all the best.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Fairhurst', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**MARK FAIRHURST**  
National Chair

**ENCLOSURE**



Ministry  
of Justice

The Right Honourable  
**Robert Buckland QC MP**  
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of  
State for Justice

**Mark Fairhurst and Steve Gillan**

POA  
Cronin House  
245 Church Street  
London  
N9M9HW

**Your Reference:** IR-673-20-  
MF&SG  
**MoJ ref:** 77735

18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Mark and Steve

### **COVID-19 LIFE ASSURANCE SCHEMES IN PRISONS**

Thank you for your letter of 28th April concerning life assurance schemes.

As you correctly state, prison officers are working incredibly hard to keep our prisons safe, 'saving lives and caring for the elderly and the vulnerable'. Following the announcement of the scheme for health and social care workers affected by Covid-19 you are keen that the government consider whether this should be extended to your members.

As you acknowledge in your letter, most prison officers are supported by the terms of their Civil Service Pension that will provide both a lump sum and ongoing payments to their dependent(s) should they die - whether that be due to Covid-19 or for any other reason whether it be linked to their work or not.

It is important to also note that the majority of members, as civil servants, will also be covered by the Civil Service Injury Benefit Scheme (CSIBS) which provides lump sum and ongoing payments to the dependents of those who die in circumstances linked specifically to their employment. This includes those "*who contract a disease to which he is exposed wholly or mainly by the nature of his duty*". There is therefore already coverage that meets the requirements of prison staff.

The government continues to review the support provided to key workers on the frontline, but we have no current plans to put in place additional schemes for the prison service.

**RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP**