



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

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Dear Colleagues

MESSAGE FROM RONNIE ARMOUR DIRECTOR GENERAL NORTHERN IRELAND

Please find attached Update message from Ronnie Armour the Director General in Northern Ireland. The Director General makes reference to the POA Northern Ireland Area Committee and Ivor Dunne the Area Chairman. We know from our regular contact with Ivor Dunne and June Robinson that there is regular dialogue with the Director General. We are pleased that the NI POA is receiving that recognition from the Management side and they continue to work collaboratively with the Director General and his team.

We know the POA in Northern Ireland are in safe hands with the POA Area Committee and the Area Chairman Ivor Dunne along with June Robinson Area Secretary negotiate hard on a regular basis with Managers to pursue safety during COVID-19 on behalf of all POA members in Northern Ireland. We wish our members well during this difficult time and again it is pleasing that the Director General recognises the input of the Area Committee.

Yours Sincerely

STEVE GILLAN
General Secretary

Yours Sincerely

MARK FAIRHURST
National Chair

ENCLOSURE

FROM: RONNIE ARMOUR
Director General NIPS
23 April 2020

TO ALL STAFF

It is hard to believe that five weeks have elapsed since the Prime Minister announced the lockdown and our lives changed dramatically. While Society is beginning to talk about recovery and what comes next in terms of easing the restrictions, it is important that we don't become complacent. The key message remains, we must all follow the Government's guidelines about hygiene and how to stay safe.

Earlier this week the Prisoner Ombudsman visited Maghaberry and the Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice visited Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood. The feedback from both was very positive in terms of the work you are doing and the lengths to which staff are going to support and keep safe those in our care. I want again to thank you for the work you are doing, it is to your credit that we had been able to manage the many challenges we face so well. I have no doubt the story will be equally positive when they visit Magilligan.

Prison staff are unfairly forgotten because the work we do is out of sight. However I was encouraged this week by comments made by our Justice Minister who asked me to thank you for the outstanding contribution you are making during this time of crisis; and in doing so noted the professionalism and commitment of staff right across our Service.

Separately I also received a letter from the Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church who said: *"I am aware that life for you and your colleagues in the prison service is far from straightforward at present. So I thought it only right and proper to drop you this wee note to say just how much many of us in wider society deeply appreciate what all of you are doing in very trying and challenging circumstances. Thank you so much."*

On Monday of this week I also chaired a very constructive meeting with the POA Area Committee. Under Prisons 2020 industrial relations have been very positive and I

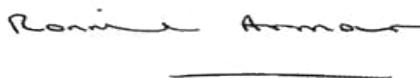
want to thank Ivor Dunne and his team for the support they have given me and the management team over the past few weeks. It is really useful to be able to brief Ivor on a daily basis and address issues as they arise. It has been equally beneficial to meet regularly with Antoinette McMillan and her NIPSA team and again I am grateful for their help and support as I am for the support received from Gary Alcock and the PGA.

One of the things I discussed with the POA was the importance of paying increments to operational staff as quickly as possible now that we have entered the new Financial Year. To do so we need to get annual reports completed urgently and I have agreed with the POA and Governing Governors that we should all aim to do so by 15 May. That will allow me to make the case for payment to the Department of Finance and hopefully get the increments paid by the end of June. It is important that we all play our part to get reports completed on time.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard to implement virtual visits in each of our prisons, this is a demonstration of innovation in a time of crisis and something we want to further develop and retain long after the crisis has passed. Can I also thank those staff who are working so hard to ensure we have the PPE we need and in doing so have identified new sources of supply.

You will also wish to note that three programmes entitled “Nolan inside Hydebank” will be shown on BBC1 at 10.40pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week. I hope the programmes will help the community better understand offending behaviour and the challenges we face in challenging and supporting those in our care to change. Please make a note to watch them if possible.

In closing I want to offer our best wishes to five of our colleagues who have contracted COVID19. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. **# Key workers together.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronnie Armour". Below the signature is a horizontal line.

RONNIE ARMOUR