



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

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POA Circular 067/2020

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Dear Colleagues

GENERAL SECRETARY UPDATE NO:5 – COVID-19

At the time of writing this update I have to report that unfortunately another colleague has sadly lost their battle against COVID-19 and my thoughts and prayers during this tragic time are with family, friends and colleagues. Out of respect I will not be naming our colleague at this moment in time until I am officially permitted to do so.

There are no easy answers to this dreadful virus and the professionalism of all POA members should not and cannot go unnoticed. Quite rightly the Butler Trust has set up a forum to recognise our hidden heroes. My thoughts also go out to those POA members and colleagues who are ill with the virus and those who are currently in hospital may you all make a speedy recovery and back to full health.

The POA NEC are continuing to work collaboratively with HMPPS and other Employers along with Government and Cabinet Office Officials. We are also applying pressure on the issues that branch officials raise with their respective NEC members. I don't think it is appropriate to highlight our successes for the membership during this pandemic but there have been plenty of issues that have been resolved effectively and efficiently by this hardworking NEC behind the scenes.

There is a time and place to highlight those significant successes but somehow it wouldn't feel right given the deaths and illnesses that we have seen occur. That is why it is correct to keep working with Government and Employers so that the best interests of our members are achieved during this pandemic.

I have received letters in from Prisoners families thanking not just the POA but POA members for the manner in which you are caring for those in custody. At every opportunity I and others on the NEC highlight the brilliant work that our members are doing in these testing times. Today I have highlighted that professionalism in a SKY News pre-recorded interview which is due to go out on Thursday 23rd April 2020. As I understand it SKY News will be doing an update program that evening on Prisons.

On the 20th April 2020 we were officially informed that 287 Prisoners in our care across 65 prisons were COVID-19 positive and 217 Prison Staff in 54 prisons (England and Wales). I hope to update you on the official figures in due course for Scotland, Northern Ireland and our Secure Hospitals when we are updated officially. The figures are concerning and rising and that is why the Government were correct to continue with the lockdown until at least 7th May 2020 when there will be another review.

On the back of that Government decision in conjunction with the recognised trade union for POA staff the GMB, I took the decision along with the Deputy General Secretary Joe Simpson to continue with the closure of our Offices throughout the United Kingdom in order to adhere to non- essential travel guidance issued by Government to try and take the pressure off the NHS at this critical time . The work of the POA continues uninterrupted with individuals working remotely and ensuring all the key work continues to a high standard. I will review this again and take the relevant advice into consideration around the 7th May 2020. I would like to thank branch officials, and NEC for their continued patience and excellent work in serving the interests of the membership at this difficult time.

The membership will be aware that I wrote an open letter to the Pay Review Body in recent times and I have now had a response which I attach to this update. I sincerely hope that in their recommendations to Government they recognise the true worth and value of all POA members and that Government also recognise the true worth of the workforce. It is with regret but outside the power of the NEC that there is once again a delay to the outcome of the Review Body. This is now a regular occurrence it seems and needs to be rectified going forward.

The POA continue behind the scenes at every opportunity to push for more PPE and testing being available we will continue to push that agenda and also an agenda that puts your Health and Safety at the forefront along with those Prisoners in our care. The National Chairman Mark Fairhurst and myself have signed a joint statement with the CEO Jo Farrar and Director General Phil Copple as part of our commitment to work jointly with HMPPS.

The TUC are kept up to date with all developments that affect our members and Frances O'Grady feeds those briefings into Government on her regular meetings with those deputising for the Prime Minister. Today we also through the TUC General Council had an opportunity to brief Sir Keir Starmer who was in attendance through a SKYPE for Business meeting.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Gillan', with a small flourish at the end.

STEVE GILLAN
General Secretary

ENCLOSURE



Office of Manpower Economics

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prison-services-pay-review-body>

20 April 2020

BY EMAIL

Dear Steve,

I am writing to thank you for your open letter to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB), dated 2 April 2020. I can confirm that all members of the Review Body have had the opportunity to read and discuss the letter.

Firstly, I want to extend the PSPRB's appreciation for the work prison staff at all grades are currently undertaking in challenging circumstances due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The PSPRB are, as always, struck by the dedication and professionalism of the prison staff we meet on our visits.

We appreciate the candid views expressed in your letter and, as you would expect, we will not always agree on all the issues. However, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the PSPRB is independent from Government and highlight that our reports have recommended awards, particularly for the closed grades, that have differed significantly from proposals submitted by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

Members take their role seriously and are fully aware that we are considered a compensatory mechanism for the loss of the right to take industrial action of any form for prison officers and operational managers. We are conscious of the ruling by the



International Labour Organization (ILO), which you will note now features prominently in the front of, and throughout, our recent reports. The ILO ruling places a responsibility on us that we take very seriously when formulating our recommendations.

I would like to take this opportunity to indicate that the PSPRB would consider reengagement from the POA as a positive development. The Review Body considers all the evidence that we receive from the parties equally and any evidence submitted by the POA would greatly add to our evidence base. We hope you will be in a position in the near future to feel that you are able to recommend to your membership that the POA should once again engage with, and provide evidence, to us.

We have now concluded oral evidence with the Minister, HMPPS and the trade unions and have informed the parties that we intent to submit our 2020 report to the Government in early June.

Yours sincerely



Tim Flesher

Chair, Prison Service Pay Review Body