



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

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## **POA Circular 065/2020**

20<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Colleagues

### **JOINT STATEMENT BETWEEN POA AND HMPPS**

Please find enclosed Joint Statement between POA/HMPPS.

Yours Sincerely

**STEVE GILLAN**  
General Secretary

Yours Sincerely

**MARK FAIRHURST**  
National Chair

**ENCLOSURE**

## Joint Communication from POA and HMPPS

### COVID 19 - Prison Officers and OSGs - your critical role as key workers at this time

The POA and HMPPS continue to work jointly and collaboratively during the Coronavirus outbreak to ensure all staff are kept as safe as they possibly can be, whilst ensuring our prisons continue to run safely in line with the restricted regimes that are now in place.

Our aim is to retain stability in our prisons and to protect life, ensuring that those in our care are cared for with dignity and respect. As designated key workers, society recognises the critical role that Prison Officer and Operational Support grades have in maintaining this stability. We recognise that, like other key workers in the front line who provide a critical public service, you do not have the option to work remotely but must in line with your duties attend work in our prisons, despite the risks, whilst you remain fit and well to do so.

Following consultations with the POA and other unions, HMPPS agreed a package of remuneration measures with HM Treasury that recognise and reward staff, helping us to meet prisoners' needs and maintain the integrity of our establishments. The package aims to recognise the brave and professional work being carried out by staff of all grades during these unprecedented times. It has now been published with further guidance.

For the foreseeable future, as the pandemic reaches its peak in England and Wales, a command structure is in place which has restricted all prison regimes to operating procedures which reflect our need to adhere to the advice of Public Health England and Wales on social distancing and virus containment. These are regimes which provide only the very basics in decency for prisoners and as such, we recognise that there are inherent risks in maintaining this for a protracted period.

An agreed COVID 19 Operational guide has been forwarded to all establishments which covers the operating procedures that **must be followed** in response to public health advice and to depleted staffing levels. This document prioritises the essential services that we must deliver. Local POA committees, alongside other recognised trade union stakeholders, will be involved and engaged in reviews of Emergency Regime Management Plans in line with any future instructions from the command structure that is now in place. At a future point, as the pandemic subsides, and as staffing levels improve, these plans will be reviewed and adjusted.

We agree that the provision of appropriate Personal Protection Equipment for staff is essential. There is high demand for PPE across the UK, and HMPPS continues to take all feasible steps to increase our stocks and maintain our supplies to establishments. To maximise the use of PPE supplies, Prisons have been provided with specific issuing guidance agreed with Public Health advisors.

Operational staff in Headquarters and other sources of operational support have been redeployed to Prisons to further support the operational environment in the coming weeks. Staff who under Government advice fall within the vulnerable individuals category are protected and will be removed from frontline duties if they so wish. Pregnant staff should not be working in prisoner facing roles at this time and may request to work remotely from their workplace during this period.

In response to POA requests, further questions and answers are being published as part of the COVID 19 staff briefings on the intranet. If there are any questions that remain outstanding, please raise them with local managers or with your local POA committee; HMPPS is committed to provide further clarification as required.

Finally, we wanted to recognise the courage and commitment of all Prison and Probation staff at this time and endorse an approach where all staff and stakeholders - prison officers, OSGs, Governors and other operational managers, probation staff, administrative and civilian grades, NHS, Health providers, chaplains, trade unions, voluntary sector partners, and all others who work in Criminal Justice and support our work - are working together and in support of one another.

Your cooperation, professionalism and bravery will not go unnoticed. On behalf of the POA and HMPPS, we thank you all.

Signed on 17 April 2020



Mark Fairhurst  
National POA Chair



Steve Gillan  
POA General Secretary



Jo Farrar  
HMPPS CEO



Phil Copple  
Director General of Prisons