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REF:CIRC/25/20

10 August 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES & SNC MEMBERS

Colleagues

RE WEARING OF MASKS

As you will be aware the SPS, following a change in Scottish Government policy due to expert advice and guidance from Health Protection Scotland (HPS), have made the decision that all staff working within a prison are now with immediate effect required to wear a disposable mask (Type 2-R).

At the National Coronavirus Response Group (NCRG) the point was made that there is further work required around this as staff will naturally have some questions following this change, however the advice given by HPS was to bring in the change now to help better protect the H&S of staff. A view the SNC agree with, and further guidance will follow this week. It should be clearly understood that this change is not instead of the other measures in place, it is as well as, and we urge that you continue to follow those precautions.

There may be members out there who due to medical reasons cannot wear a mask, and if this is the case we would urge to speak with your FLM to discuss the options to ensure your H&S is not put at risk.

Naturally with this change people may become anxious to why this has happened and is there an increased likelihood of COVID cases within the Prison. The guidance we have been given by HPS is that this is a preventative measure as it offers another level of protection should a member of staff have the infection. It is not due to a concern that the Prisons are anticipating a sudden increase of cases.

As mentioned, there is further work required around this, for example, staff who work themselves or who can maintain physical distancing, and the application of the change in these circumstances. However, it is important we follow the advice from HPS and Scottish government. We will be raising some questions through our involvement in the NCRG and will look to update you of any new information.

In the meantime, please continue the excellent and professional standards that have been set so far, as your hard work has been instrumental in the remarkable containment in keeping cases so low within our Prisons to date.

It is appropriate that we finish by passing on our best wishes to the officer who has been diagnosed with COVID last week, and to all the staff in both Low Moss and Grampian who are impacted by the local outbreaks in their respective areas.

Take care and Stay safe.

On behalf of the Scottish National Committee POAS

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