



HM Prison & Probation Service

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To: HMPPS Recovery Independent Advisory Forum Members

Prisons National Framework Exit

Dear colleagues

As you are aware, HMPPS has been considering for a number of months when would be the right time to exit the COVID-19 [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#). I am now pleased to say, following ministerial agreement, that the Prison and Youth Custody Service will formally exit the framework today, 9 May 2022.

The risk of a COVID-19 infection leading to death and serious illness is substantially lower than at any other points during the pandemic. We currently have over 90 prisons to be at Stage-1 (the lowest levels of restrictions). This is a huge step forward and testament to the hard work of frontline teams to get outbreaks under control. We have come a long way and now feel confident the conditions are right for the service to adopt a more normalised approach to COVID-19.

On the ground, the winding down of these restrictions will mean social distancing and facemasks for staff, prisoners, young people, and visitors will no longer be required on a routine basis. In addition, prisons will soon move to a new approach to testing. We will share the details of this at a future meeting.

We also plan to stand down COVID-19-Gold Command, an essential part of our operational response infrastructure to respond to COVID-19 and replace it with a more agile Prison Operations Team. This team will continue to support establishments and where necessary, manage system-level pressures where these cannot be managed at a regional level.

Although many will see this announcement as a positive step in the right direction, others will understandably be anxious about the changes ahead which is why we remain cautious. We need to accept that COVID-19 and its impacts are going to be with us for some time to come yet. Many prisons will still be managing outbreaks today and it is highly likely we will see new variants in the future. To mitigate against these risks, we will continue with a minimum set of ongoing COVID-19 controls as well as providing clear guidance and support to help establishments manage new local outbreaks. In addition, there will be a continued drive on core infection control measures, particularly vaccinations, regular handwashing and effective cleaning which will be critical in preventing any resurgence of the virus.

As we begin to recover from the pandemic, it is right that we begin to look to the future. Over the coming weeks and months, we will be sharing more about how we plan to reform our prison regimes to ensure that prisoners use their time more effectively. We will be accelerating our work to ensure we are recruiting the right people and doing what we can to retain and develop our existing staff. Finally, we will be demonstrating how we are delivering on the commitments set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper and showing we have a

prison service that is playing its part in helping cut crime, reducing reoffending, and protecting the public from harm.

Our exit from the National Framework will be a big change for all of us but this change provides us with an opportunity to deliver long lasting improvements in our system - improvements I know we all want to see.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Copple". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

PHIL COPPLE

Director General of Prisons