

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Compassionate Early Release Template Letter to Download and Use

As you know, PAS is calling for the release of low risk prisoners and those prisoners who are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus (see below and previous e-mail from PAS). To that end, we have created a Compassionate Early Release request template letter for anyone to amend and use if they believe that a prisoner should be released early on compassionate grounds given the extreme circumstances of the coronavirus emergency.

This letter asks the Secretary of State for Justice to grant early release of the prisoner, and the prison Governor to confirm to you, either way, what steps are being taken to protect vulnerable people in prison. Please feel free to share this letter with anyone you believe it may help. Please do let PAS know if you receive a favourable response.

[Download Compassionate Early Release Letter Template here.](#)

NB: This letter template is not applicable to those serving indeterminate or life sentences. Such prisoners who are low risk and particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus should write to the Parole Board or Public Protection Casework Section. If your friend / family member has a prison lawyer advising them on parole matters, please contact them for further advice.

News: First PAS Coronavirus Success Story

Pas Helps Sickle Cell Anaemia Sufferer to Self-Isolate at His Father's Home

PAS received a call to our Advice Line from a prisoner due to be released to an Approved Premises (AP) imminently, despite the fact that he has Sickle Cell Anaemia, which is one of the highest risk groups for coronavirus infection and full-blown COVID-19. As the AP would be shared with other residents, the prisoner was scared, worried about exposure to the coronavirus, but had been told by the Parole Board that he had no option but to be released there.

The prisoner's father had offered to accommodate his son so he could safely self-isolate for the recommended 12 weeks for Sickle Cell and his Offender Supervisor (OS) had been trying to contact the Offender Manager (OM) for three weeks in order to enact this arrangement, but

without success. The prisoner had had three OMs recently and did not know the name of the most recent one. PAS advised that we'd attempt to identify and contact the OM to make informal representations for the prisoner to be released to his father's place of residence.

With the help of a very good London-based Probation Officer, previously known to PAS, we managed to track down the OM and suggested a Home Circumstances Report – over the phone – and prompt change to the prisoner's licence in view of Public Health England's guidance on vulnerable groups and coronavirus. We then spoke with the OM on the phone again and were assured that a new Home Circumstances Report had been done and that the prisoner would be released to his father's as we wanted.

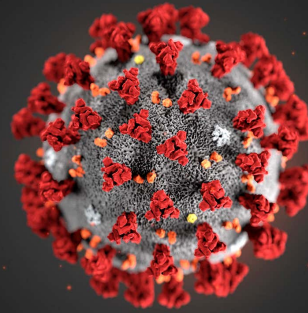
Changes to PAS Services During Crisis

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, on 12 March 2020, PAS closed its office to all but a skeleton Advice Line staff in order to keep that service safely going for as long as we possibly could.

Since then, we have been reviewing which services we are able to continue to provide and considering any adjustments we will have to make in the coming days and weeks as we normalise remote working and isolation.

Telephone Advice Line

With the suspension of outreach services and the Letters Clinic temporarily disrupted (see below), PAS is prioritising our Advice Line service, ensuring that we are able to continue dispensing advice and support to as many prisoners as we can by expanding the hours that the service is available. Obviously this work is now having to be executed remotely. Calls to the Advice Line are redirected to the mobile phone number of our Advice Line Manager, or Advice Line Caseworker, who either take the call or redirect it again to the



PAS Calling for the Release of Prisoners

To recap, in our last e-mail, on 16 March 2020, we informed you that PAS had issued a statement calling on the government to assist in slowing down the potential coronavirus crisis in prisons by releasing the following groups of prisoners:

1. Everybody aged over 75, no matter what their conviction.
2. Those over 50 convicted of non-violent/sex crimes.
3. People held under immigration detention powers, whether in prison or detention centres.
4. All those who have under a year of their sentence left to serve.
5. All prisoners with physical disabilities.

Caseworker/s on duty.

Pending consolidation of remote systems and the implementation of efficient working practices, it is our intention to open the Advice Line more frequently than is usual, with more members of staff answering the phones at any one time. Hours will be confirmed in due course.

Outreach Clinics

Our outreach programme is suspended. We will resume Outreach Clinics inside prisons as soon as it is deemed safe to do so.

Letters Clinic/Legal Letters

In terms of PAS' Letters Clinic, we are keenly aware that prisoners remain one of the few communities of people who still send letters and we are trying to keep that line of communication open. With our office due to close completely in the coming days, alternative arrangements are being made to secure ongoing receipt and dispatch of physical mail. We will have our incoming mail redirected to a member of staff who has access to a printer/scanner, who can then send the documents electronically to the Caseworker or member of staff addressed. All of our Caseworkers will also work on current cases at home and continue to send letters and legal documents to prisoners and other recipients via the Royal Mail as usual, albeit via local post offices, or post-boxes. Mail may take longer than usual to arrive in the present circumstances.

PAS has also subscribed to the 'email a prisoner' scheme, whereby messages and documents are sent to a general

6. People awaiting extradition.

7. IPP prisoners whose tariffs have expired.

We stated that these measures would have no discernible effect on the crime rate and would allow prisons to implement strategies for safely managing and caring for those high risk prisoners who remain incarcerated.

Since then, PAS has learned that there are no plans for early releases, although the release of pregnant women in custody is being considered.



For all the latest PAS news during this unnerving time, please remember to follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

We are also posting regular updates to our website, which you can access [here](#).



prison e-mail. These are then printed out by Prison Officers and handed to the prisoner in question. Although not confidential, this is another way to reach out to the prisoner community during this extraordinary time.



Statement for Families Regarding Use of Advice Line During Crisis

During this time of crisis for us all, PAS understands that families of prisoners may wish to contact us in order to enquire about what their loved-ones may be facing in prison. While PAS adapts to working from home and isolating, we are delivering a limited service and – of course – must focus our resources on advising and supporting prisoners. If you would like to submit a query to PAS, please **DO NOT USE THE PHONE**. Instead, please e-mail PAS at: advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Prisoners' Advice Service is a registered charity (No: 1054495) and is a company limited by guarantee (No: 3180659).

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