

**Dr Jo Farrar**  
**CEO**  
**Her Majesty's Prisons & Probation Service**  
By email [ceohmpps@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ceohmpps@justice.gov.uk)

**CC: Phil Copple**

5th May 2020

Dear Jo,

I hope this finds you well in these extraordinary times.

We are a group of specialised organisations and academics working in criminal justice with shared vision and values. We have come together during Covid-19 to develop a collective approach to address some of the emerging concerns around the impact of this pandemic in prisons.

We commend HMPPS staff in managing this unprecedented situation without any major disturbances in prisons as witnessed in other countries. However, we are concerned that the virus continues to spread across prisons. Public Health England has published a report suggesting that in addition to confirmed cases in prisons, it is possible/probable there are 1,784 further Covid-19 cases. This is likely to be an underestimate. Given the disproportionate impact of the virus on BAME NHS and care staff and it is suspected more widely, we ask HMPPS update on the issues below.

It is important to clarify that when referring to BAME we mean people with shared languages, cultures, religions, and practices including Gypsy, Roma and Irish Travellers.

1. In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act 2010 what steps are in place to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on BAME prisoners and staff members? How will the findings be published and when?
2. What is in place to monitor health care for infected prisoners from different communities? How will this information be published and when?
3. What is available for prisoners who need to be isolated and which groups of prisoners have access to, for example, single cells?
4. What is HMPPS doing to communicate with and reassure families of those with Covid-19 and other prisoners?

5. What information is provided to prisoners so they are aware of their rights and how this information is communicated to them?
6. What mechanisms for independent oversight of the measures to deal with Covid-19 will be set up? This includes oversight of any decisions made and the proportionality of actions. Will these mechanisms monitor the impact on prisoners and staff from protected characteristic groups? Will this information be published?
7. What is HMPPS doing to ensure fair and safe conditions in National Probation Service 'approved premises'?
8. Does HMPPS record incidents of self-harm and suicide in custody during the lockdown? Does this data include the breakdown for protected characteristic groups? When will this information will be published?
9. Is there any published data available from detention centres in relation to Covid-19? i.e. number of staff and detainees affected?

We would like to convey these questions to you in hope to obtain some clarity.

We understand that prisons are in 'command' state and staff 'on the ground', are trying their best to meet the needs of people in their care. Our sector understands these challenges as we are also faced by difficult decisions to balance the 'no harm' principle and the duty of care to our service-users: BAME prisoners, their families and communities.

We look forward to your response,

Our very best wishes to you and your teams.

Khatuna Tsintsadze (Group coordinator)

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