

NPS staff in Prisons – Clarifications and Advice to Members

Since our mailout yesterday we have had some useful discussions with NPS Senior Leaders to get some clarity on the main issues members are facing. Below you will find the paragraphs from yesterday's comms in italics with the clarification/update below each one.

Napo concern:

Most OMUs have small office / workspaces so social distancing is impossible – they feel they should be following the advice that other NPS staff have been given to work at home wherever possible. While the EDM advises work at home there is conflicting guidance to have staff in the prison OMU and we have seen incidences of staff who have NPS laptops being told by their SPO they can work at home but then being contacted directly by the Prison Governor to order them to come into the prison to work. We need unambiguous guidance including reference to the decision making process being via NPS not the prison for NPS staff.

HMPPS Response:

Prisons have been made aware of the Probation/Prison EDM, and are supportive of the principle outlined that “In order to support the principles of social distancing within Offender Management Units, staff should be supported to work from home where possible.” NPS staff in prisons remain NPS employees, and decisions on homeworking/redeployment will be made by local NPS managers. Of course, this will be in conjunction with prison managers, and will take account of Government guidance and practical application.

Napo concern:

Where staff are working in the prison here is a need for guidance and possibly PPE relating to key/lock use as there is much more requirement to touch handles/locks/door surfaces in prisons as doors and gates are locked and unlocked multiple times by a large number of staff

HMPPS Response:

This has been referred to H&S team for further clarification, once we have further information we will share it.

Napo Concern:

Some staff have been told that OMU staff must remain in work as they (OMU staff) will be required to assist the rest of the prison in their roles. There is evidence of this in a circular that has been provided by Ian Lawrence. This is particularly concerning as NPS staff are not trained in the same way as prison staff and their skills and expertise are desperately needed for probation right now.

HMPPS Response:

It has been clarified that the circular referred to was an early draft which was changed prior to issue and there is now no reference to Probation staff taking on prison operational roles. HMPPS team will be clarifying this and will seek to prevent the inaccurate information from being disseminated further.

Napo concern:

Some staff have been told they will be redeployed to community teams or APs but not when and they are querying how decisions will be made on redeployment and what support they will be given to adjust to an unfamiliar role and environment. Some staff working in prisons have been there some years so also unfamiliar with processes and procedures. There is no guidance as to how many staff should remain in the prison OMU and how decisions will be made about who should remain and who should be redeployed and where.

HMPPS Response:

Prisons have been made aware of the Probation/Prison EDM, and are supportive of the principle outlined that "In order to support the principles of social distancing within Offender Management Units, staff should be supported to work from home where possible." NPS staff in prisons remain NPS employees, and decisions on homeworking/redeployment will be made by local NPS managers. Of course, this will be in conjunction with prison managers, and will take account of Government guidance and practical application.

Additional information and clarity on redeployments

We have also seen the official comms on redeployments from Prison OMUs which reads as follows:

Friday, 27 March 2020 at 10:04
To: XXX

In the light of NPS Divisions having moved to Exceptional Delivery Models to deliver services in the community, NPS and PSP have reviewed the placement of Probation Officers in Public Sector Prisons. Public protection remains absolutely critical and will remain our focus throughout this challenging period, and to facilitate the delivery of the Exceptional Delivery Models in the community, it has been decided to redeploy 50% of the Probation Officers currently deployed in custodial environments to community based teams from Monday 30th March.

In London, where the decision was made last week to redeploy all Probation Officers to community teams as a result of the particular staffing issues, community based Probation Officers will undertake any urgent Offender Management or assessment activity remotely.

The Exceptional Delivery Model that covers this work will follow

Napo Advice to members

If you are concerned that the EDM and the clarifications in this document are not being appropriately followed please raise this initially with your Line Manager and seek help from branch reps who can assist you to escalate it to the appropriate Head of Stakeholder engagement or Director. If your concern cannot be resolved within your division your branch rep can refer the issue to Katie Lomas and Ian Lawrence who can liaise with HMPPS Senior Leaders to seek resolution.

We are all working in extraordinary circumstances and sometimes we all make mistakes, be kind to each other when there are mistakes, and work together to put them right.