

Napo C19 Bulletin 10 – 09-04-2020

Advice on keeping safe in the workplace

Following extensive high level engagement between HMPPS, Napo and our sister unions, the NPS is producing new guidance on PPE and Hygiene for all NPS workplaces. We have seen early drafts of this and while there are some points still to work on we have asked that it is issued now to Divisions to give members a framework for taking the appropriate action if it is not immediately enacted. If necessary, it can be updated in future following feedback from members.

Napo have made the following basic demands.

For all workplaces Except APs:

- Social distancing in the workplace between colleagues must be possible and hand hygiene products made available (soap, hot water, paper towels, hand sanitiser) – if not the workplace must not be used and should be closed
- Arrangements for seeing clients in contact centres must include social distancing and hand hygiene as above – if this is not possible the contact centre must not be used for client visits (although if the workspace in the building meets the criteria above it can be used for non-contact work). Clients exhibiting any symptoms should not attend a contact centre.
- There is new guidance for the use of hire and pool cars for doorstep visits and where this is not possible to follow these vehicles should not be used.
- Similarly, there is guidance on the use of personal vehicles for doorstep visits and where this is not possible to follow these vehicles should not be used.
- There is guidance for the doorstep visiting process and where this is not possible to follow the visit should not take place. Doorstep visits are to establish service user residence at an address and should not be used for ongoing supervision in place of telephone contact.

For Approved Premises:

- There is specific guidance for APs as social distancing may not always be possible and PPE must be used in these circumstances.
- The guidance provides helpful information about the type of PPE to be used in different circumstances and the training regime for its use which must be followed. Where appropriate PPE cannot be provided and where social distancing is not possible as an alternative our position is that the AP should be closed.
- Concerns about APs that cannot be resolved locally should be shared with Siobhan Foreman sforeman@napo.org.uk

E3 Pay Protection Success

Trade Unions have been raising the issue of E3 pay protection for some time. Members affected will know that where staff were downgraded in the E3 job evaluation process there was a commitment from the employer to offer support and training to allow them to move to a role at the higher pay band. This has never materialised in any meaningful way, and some members will be approaching the end of their period of pay protection.

Following lengthy discussions, the employer has agreed with the Trade Unions position on this and will now issue guidance on an extension of E3 pay protection for those affected. We will of course share more advice and guidance on this once we have it, but this is a significant achievement for the unions and will benefit members who were, through no fault of their own, downgraded as a result of the E3 process.

NPS SPDR position confirmed

For the NPS there will shortly be guidance issued that will relieve the administrative burden on managers for processing SPDRs. This should not remove the usual discussions about practice and performance but the system will automatically default all SPDR scores to “Good” so managers will only need to complete paperwork where they believe a score of “outstanding” is warranted or, for those in formal poor performance processes only, where “needs improvement” is warranted. SPDR validation processes will be restricted to SPDRs where a score needs improvement or ‘outstanding’ has been given, and will be a much reduced process. We welcome this move to relieve the workloads of managers.

NPS – to restructure or not to restructure?

Last week we were assured by HMPPS Senior Leaders that, although the new Regional Directors were being welcomed into the NPS, the regional restructure was to be paused until the C-19 crisis has passed. Unfortunately this message did not land with some divisions, who have told staff already struggling to cope with unprecedented changes to their work that they will now have to adjust to being in a new region and having different management structures. In some areas this has more impact than others due to the geography and structural changes required. There are also challenges for Napo as some of the new structures don't fit easily with our branch structure which is the frontline in terms of representation and support for members. We have made it clear that it is unacceptable to make structural changes at the moment when the relationships between frontline staff and their managers, and between Unions reps and managers, is so crucial. We continue to have discussions on this, and our position is that where such changes have been made we expect urgent action to reverse them and return stability and consistency for members and reps.

Special bonus scheme – as tricky as predicted

The Probation Trade Unions did not agree with much of the detail in the special bonus scheme or the rates of remuneration on offer so have not agreed to it. HMPPS nevertheless imposed on NPS staff a model that had been devised largely on the basis of prison and HQ grades rather than NPS grades. As predicted, the implementation has been confusing and divisive with members being told one day they were entitled to an allowance only to be told the opposite the next. After much discussion the employer produced some further guidance in the form of FAQs. Unfortunately these focussed almost solely on prison grades and terms and conditions and would be of little use to NPS staff. We have insisted that additional NPS specific guidance is produced as a matter of urgency so that we can offer advice and support to members facing confusion about their entitlements.

More HR confusion

Formal HR processes such as sickness reviews, disciplinary and grievance hearings should be suspended, apart from the most exceptional cases. This message was given to members last week and we were assured that NPS divisions were instructed to implement it. Many CRCs have also adopted this very sensible approach, only progressing those cases where there was an exceptional reason such as allowing someone to return to work or to retire on the grounds of ill health. As ever, the instruction was interpreted differently in different areas with some NPS Divisions denying all knowledge of it. We have now been assured that all Divisional Directors have been reminded of the instruction this week so if any reps or members are asked to participate in cases after today they should refer initially to the Divisional Director and escalate to us if sense does not prevail.

National Chair and GS to provide Oral Evidence to Justice Committee

Napo have been invited to provide evidence to a formal session of the Justice Select Committee (JSC) next Tuesday afternoon (*see Twitter and the Napo Website for exact timings and viewing details*).

The JSC are interested in understanding the range of challenges being faced by our members in the NPS and CRC's during this unprecedented Coronavirus crisis. This is a valuable and very timely opportunity for Napo to report on the tremendous work being undertaken by our members to try and maintain vital services and protect our communities and service users from harm.

Obviously, the focus will be on the current emergency and we will gladly report on the positive progress with most Probation providers in working together to achieve the above objective. Nevertheless, we will be making it very clear as to why Napo remains opposed to the proposed contracting out of Intervention and Programme work next year. In addition, we will also want to make the JSC aware of the fact that the Government have so far failed to implement the agreement that was reached in 2018 on pay progression for NPS members.

Napo 'meets' with new Shadow Justice Minister

This week the new Labour Party Leader Sir Keir Starmer, appointed a new Shadow Cabinet. Their task will be to work with Government in the national interest during the current C19 crisis, but also to hold that Government to account on a number of fronts.

Today National Chair Katie Lomas and General Secretary Ian Lawrence were invited to take part in a Skype call with the Shadow Justice Secretary David Lammy MP. Many members may recall David holding this position in a previous Labour Government and being highly critical of the lack of support for Probation staff from their senior leaders at the time.

We provided a comprehensive summary of the difficulties that our members are coping with right now, as well as explaining our campaigning objectives on Probation reform, pay and workloads and rebuilding the probation service following the disasters resulting from Transforming Rehabilitation.

David and Keir Starmer, have both been invited to attend the 2020 Napo AGM and whilst we await confirmation of their availability, David will monitor the outcomes from Tuesdays JSC hearing and intends to produce a personal Video message for Napo members in the near future.

Radio 5 'shoutout'

Every day this week Radio 5 Live is doing a shout out to key workers during the pandemic. Yesterday they chose to give a shout out to Probation and Prison staff. A number of probation staff got involved with phone ins and text messages being read out. Napo General Secretary Ian Lawrence was interviewed and highlighted just how hard Napo members are working in these difficult times. It was a real morale boost for staff, many of whom have felt a bit forgotten in this crisis despite going above and beyond the normal call of duty and coping with home working for the first time. A big thank you to all that got involved!

Further talks, If you or any member of staff you know is isolating in an abusive relationship please seek help immediately. You can call the national help line on 0808 2000 247 for advice. If you are in danger and cannot speak you can call 999 then press 55. This will alert the police and they will come to your home. Alternatively you could contact Napo via tbassett@napo.org.uk.

Finally, have a restful Easter

Just a few weeks ago, nobody would have envisaged that we would all spend one of the most important national holidays across the UK, confined to our homes save only for limited outdoor visits for essential shopping and exercise.

We can only hope that all of our members take this opportunity to get some much needed rest and relaxation over this weekend. Wherever you work across the 23 employers where Napo is recognised as the authoritative voice for its members, you can be proud of the contribution you have made during the national emergency. It speaks volumes for the values you believe in and our collective commitment to create a better and safer society.