

Irish Prison Service HQ

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Co. Longford

IRISH PRISON SERVICE**Seirbhís Phríosúin na hÉireann****Ceanncheathrú**

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Dear Law Society Member,

In line with Public Health Guidelines, the Irish Prison Service are taking necessary precautions and implementing measures to protect prisoners in their custody during the COVID-19 pandemic. To prevent the spread of the virus and for the health, safety and wellbeing of all those in the prisons, prisoners who display symptoms and require testing for COVID-19 are isolated from the general population and those who are over the age of 70, have underlying medical issues or are newly committed are cocooning or in quarantine. Prisoners who present as symptomatic and are awaiting test results are monitored by clinical staff daily and receiving appropriate care. The Irish Prison Service are working within the context of the Government response and the advice and guidance of HSE and Public Health. Within this framework, the service has built upon contingency plans to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, business continuity and the maintenance of services such as psychology, chaplaincy and education, in-reach mental health services from the National Forensic Mental Health Service, Merchants Quay and the provision of methadone. We are also making sure that where possible prisoners have access to phone or video link with their legal representatives, where this is not possible we suggest that you communicate by post which will be treated confidentially as provided for under Rule 44 of the Prison Rules.

Where we are experiencing difficulties in responding to requests, we will, where possible, communicate with the individuals concerned, including any extension to the period for responding and the reasons for the delay in responding.

We would ask that you not call in person to visit your client in prison unless absolutely necessary. Access to video link professional visit are available in all closed prisons and I have attached here a 'How to Book a Video Link Professional Visit' guide for those who wish to avail of this service, however you should be aware that there is huge pressure on this facility at the present time due to number of requests being received and the additional court appearances being facilitated.

To date we have been successful in keeping the Prisons COVID-19 free and thank you for your patience in regard to any delays you may have in getting in touch with your clients.

Kathy Hoctor
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