

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) prison preparedness: Lucy Frazer statement

The Government is doing everything it can to combat the COVID-19 outbreak, based on the very latest scientific and medical advice. This includes in our prisons, where we are working closely with Public Health England, the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care to manage the challenges we face.

The safety and wellbeing of staff, prisoners and visitors is paramount and at the heart of our approach.

Prisons have existing, well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks of infectious diseases. This means prisons are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified, including isolating individuals where necessary.

Basic hygiene is a key part of tackling the virus and good practice is being promoted on posters throughout the estate. Handwashing facilities are available to all prisoners – not just in cells but other shared areas such as education blocks and kitchens. Staff and visitors also have access to handwashing facilities and we have worked closely with suppliers to ensure adequate supply of soap and cleaning materials.

We understand that prisoners and their loved ones might be concerned about the situation. But we can assure them that we will continue to operate normal regimes, with the minimum disruption, for as long as we can. This will include visits to prisoners but, in line with Public Health advice for the general public, we urge any friend or family member not to come to a prison for visit if they have any symptoms associated with COVID-19 – a fever or new, persistent cough. We are also looking into ways to keep prisoners in close contact with their families in all eventualities, and will share further information as and when necessary.

We have procedures agreed with our public health colleagues for protecting staff in the workplace but, like any member of the community, some prison staff may need to self-isolate in line with public health advice, or may become infected. We are taking steps to boost staff availability and so enable us to look after prisoners properly and minimise the impacts on prison regimes of staff absences.

There is a huge amount of work taking place, and I want to thank all those who have been striving tirelessly to make sure we are ready to do all we can to respond over the coming weeks.

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## Joint statement by UK and EU negotiators on next week's round of negotiations

Given the latest COVID-19 developments, UK and EU negotiators have today jointly decided not to hold next week's round of negotiations in London, in the form originally scheduled.

Both sides are currently exploring alternative ways to continue discussions, including if possible the use of video conferences.

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## PM statement on coronavirus: 12 March 2020

Good afternoon everybody and thank you very much for coming.

I've just chaired a meeting of the government's emergency committee including ministers from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

And it's clear that coronavirus, COVID-19, continues and will continue to spread across the world and our country over the next few months. We've done what can be done to contain this disease and this has bought us valuable time.

But it is now a global pandemic.

And the number of cases will rise sharply and indeed the true number of cases is higher – perhaps much higher – than the number of cases we have so far confirmed with tests.

I've got to be clear, we've all got to be clear, that this is the worst public health crisis for a generation.

Some people compare it to seasonal flu. Alas, that is not right. Owing to the lack of immunity, this disease is more dangerous.

And it's going to spread further and I must level with you, level with the British public, many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time. And the Chief Scientific Adviser will set out the best information we have on that in a moment.

But as we've said over the last few weeks, we have a clear plan that we are now working through.

And we are now moving to the next phase in that plan.

Because this is now not just to attempt to contain the disease as far as possible, but to delay its spread and thereby minimise the suffering. If we delay the peak even by a few weeks, then our NHS will be in a stronger state as the weather improves and fewer people suffer from normal respiratory diseases, more beds are available and we'll have more time for medical research.

We can also act to stretch the peak of the disease over a longer period so that our society is better able to cope.

The Chief Medical Officer will set out our lines of defence. We have to deploy these at the right time to maximise their effect. The most important task will be to protect our elderly and most vulnerable people during the peak weeks when there is the maximum risk of exposure to the disease and when the NHS will be under the most pressure. So the most dangerous period is not now but some weeks away depending on how fast it spreads.

Today therefore we are moving forward with our plan. From tomorrow, if you have coronavirus symptoms, however mild – either a new continuous cough or a high temperature – then you should stay at home for at least 7 days to protect others and help slow the spread of the disease.

We advise all those over 70 and those with serious medical conditions against going on cruises and we advise against international school trips.

At some point in the next few weeks, we are likely to go further and if someone in a household has those symptoms, we will be asking everyone in the household to stay at home. We are not introducing this yet for reasons Sir Patrick will explain, but I want to signal now that this is coming down the track.

We are considering the question of banning major public events such as sporting fixtures. The scientific advice as we've said over the last couple of weeks is that banning such events will have little effect on the spread.

But there is also the issue of the burden that such events can place on public services. So we're discussing these issues with colleagues in all parts of the United Kingdom and will have more to say shortly about the timing of further action in that respect.

At all stages, we have been guided by the science, and we will do the right thing at the right time.

We are not – repeat not – closing schools now. The scientific advice is that this could do more harm than good at this time. But we are of course keeping this under review and this again may change as the disease spreads. Schools should only close if they are specifically advised to do so. And that remains our advice.

There is no escaping the reality that these measures will cause severe disruption across our country for many months.

The best scientific advice is that this will help us slow the disease and save lives. There will be detailed information available on the NHS website and from 111 online. But I want to stress something that is very important in the wake of what we're saying this afternoon – I urge people, who think in view of what we're saying about their potential symptoms that they should stay at home, not to call 111 but to use the internet for information if they can.

I also want at this stage to speak directly to older people. Because this disease is particularly dangerous for you, for older people, even though the vast majority this will be a mild to moderate illness, I know that many people will be very worried. And I think we should all be thinking about our elderly relatives, the more vulnerable members of their family, our neighbours, and everything we can do to protect them over the next few months. We're going to need to mobilise millions of people to help and support each other. And I just want to you to know that the government will do all we can to help you and your family during this period. We're not just going to be as you saw yesterday supporting the economy during this period, we will be providing money and many other forms of support, and helping communities to support each other.

And as we have done over the last few weeks, we will continue to provide, as soon as we have it, as much clear scientific and medical information as we can.

So I'd like to end by repeating the two important messages, with which you will have become familiar – it is still vital, perhaps more vital than ever – that we remember to wash our hands.

And lastly of course even if things seem tough now, just to remember, that we will get through this, this country will get through this epidemic, just as it has got through many tougher experiences before if we look out for each other and commit wholeheartedly to a full national effort.

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## **“The world’s worst humanitarian crisis can’t afford to deteriorate any longer”- Calling for de-escalation in Yemen**

Thank you very much, Mr President. Thank you to Martin, thank you to Ramesh, thank you to both of you for all that your teams are doing in these very difficult circumstances.

We come here every month and we hear these briefings and they normally swing

between optimism and pessimism. But we all know the underlying realities of Yemen and we all know the risks that face the Yemeni people. And in that connection, I have to say, I find it astonishing that there can still be the sort of fighting that both Martin and Ramesh have described today.

I want to begin by echoing both your pleas to all parties for the fighting to stop and for de-escalation to begin. And as Martin said, this has to be public, it has to be accountable, it has to be nationwide, and we have to get into more negotiations, wider negotiations that actually make tangible progress. So the United Kingdom says today to all the parties, please act in good faith. Please engage in the process. Please seize the opportunity and ensure that 2020 is the year when we bring this dreadful conflict to a close. Martin has laid out what the roadmap to that closes and we urge the parties to cease it without delay.

I want to also echo what Martin said when he was in Marib. The conflict cannot be solved on the battlefield and I want to talk about the continuing obstructions put on the Redeployment Coordination Committee by the Houthis. I note the announcement today that the Government of Yemen has suspended its participation in the Committee. Less engagement is not the route to bringing peace to Hodeidah or to Yemen as a whole. Again, the United Kingdom urges and implores all the parties to constructively cooperate with General Guha and UNMHA. There is one positive development in the increased engagement between Saudi Arabia and Oman at least that's how it seems. Increased dialogue between regional actors is key for stability, not just in Yemen, but in the region as a whole.

On humanitarian access, Mr. President, I think Ramesh is absolutely right to say this in the context of international humanitarian law and the figure about casualties of children going up from 1 in 5 to 1 in 4 is shameful and it should horrify us all and urged us to redouble our efforts. On the difficult issue of the operating environment for humanitarian actors. I know there have been some small signs of improvement in North Yemen, but of course there's much more to do. We call on the Houthis to now deliver on the minimum operating requirements that the international community has clearly set out. The world's worst humanitarian crisis can't afford to deteriorate any longer. We look to the UN and the international community to remain united in response to access constraints and this was possible at the Brussels donor meeting on 13 February, which was helpful. Any plans to scale back assistance should be fully coordinated in order to limit the impact on Yemenis in need.

I wanted to echo what Ramesh said about the SAFER oil tanker. Again, it is incredible that every month we come here and every month we hear how precarious the situation is with this tanker and nothing gets done. So while I know negotiations are underway to find a diplomatic way forward again, I call on the Houthis to allow either the removal of the oil or repair mission to precede. Continued Houthi inaction on this issue is nothing short of reckless. They are playing dice with people's lives and with the environment in a very important part of the world. The huge environmental and humanitarian damage must be avoided and all steps must be taken to that end.

I have followed with interest what was said about the economy. We're very

concerned that the Central Bank of Yemen may run out of foreign currency reserves in the next few weeks, which of course will exacerbate the humanitarian and political consequences. Significant external financial assistance to the Central Bank at the scale of \$1-\$22 billion dollars we believe is urgently needed so that imports can come in. And I hear what Ramesh described about the bank notes and obviously, that needs resolving quickly and the currency needs to stabilize so ordinary Yemenis can afford the food and medical supplies they need. So we look to the Government of Yemen to come up urgently with a credible and transparent plan that reassures potential donors of their investment to the Yemeni people. And again, I think this is one of those issues which is getting closer and closer to the precipice so we really do need to take action.

Lastly, Mr. President, if I may, I'd like to say something about Covid-19. The last thing Yemen needs will be an outbreak of this, I notice the increasing restrictions that many states are implementing in the region. It is good to know that UN agencies are taking steps to ensure the effect on their work is as limited as possible.

Thank you.

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## [Court of Appeal to live-stream family cases](#)

- Court of Appeal family hearings to be live-streamed for the first time
- Pilot includes safeguarding measures to maintain privacy and protect vulnerable individuals
- Part of move to increase transparency and public confidence in the justice system

A statutory instrument laid in Parliament today (12 March 2020) will pave the way for the project, following the success of a pilot to live-stream civil cases launched in 2018.

Family cases that reach the Court of Appeal include certain divorce or care proceedings. The move will mean that these cases could be broadcast online to increase public understanding – with the first hearing expected later this year.

Safeguarding measures will be in place including a delay to the live-stream, giving judges the ability to halt the broadcasting immediately if necessary.

Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said:

Every day family court judges do outstanding work making difficult

decisions in highly emotive cases, often involving children.

By working with the judiciary on innovative pilots such as this we are making the system as transparent as possible, with the right safeguards in place.

This builds on our recent action to improve public understanding of our justice system, including by allowing television cameras to broadcast sentencing remarks from Crown Courts for the first time.

Sir Terence Etherton, The Master of the Rolls, and Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division said:

We are delighted that the Government has taken forward our initiative of livestreaming the court of appeal civil division.

“Being open about what happens in court is critical for public confidence and understanding of the work which the judiciary undertakes. For centuries our court rooms have been open to the public. Livestreaming brings the public gallery into the 21st century and we are delighted that we can make the difficult and important work of the Court of Appeal Civil Division open to the broadest possible audience.

Many of our most significant cases come from the family jurisdiction. It is only right that cases of such wide public importance are made open to the public. Recent examples of cases looking at issues such as Islamic faith marriage, access to fertility records, or transgender identity are of interest to the public and it is important for the public to see how the court approaches these issues.

We are of course mindful that in some cases, full public access would not be appropriate, we will ensure that those involved in such cases remain protected.

Anonymity can also be awarded due heightened sensitivity of family cases, be that for the protection of a party or a witness, and the court retains the discretion not to live-stream a hearing at all.

Parties will be informed prior to the hearing whether it has been selected for the pilot and given the chance to raise any objections.

Nominated cases will be live-streamed on the judiciary website, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

## **Notes to editors**

- Suitable cases for broadcast will be selected by the judiciary based on public interest and will exclude cases with reporting restrictions.

- Parties are written to ahead of the live stream to inform them they have been selected and giving parties the chance to raise any objections, either by phone or in writing.
- There is a 90 second time delay, and a stop feature to allow for recordings to be stopped by the judge or court clerk. This acts as a safeguard against any breach of reporting restriction or any other issue, for example, disruption to the proceedings. Camera's in court are directed at the Judges' Bench and the Bar and not at the parties.