

3 April 2020

Sent by Email Only

Dear Provider/HMPPS

Covid-19 and Prison Education

We write further in this matter. Since we last corresponded, the attached report has been published by the Howard League.

The report author, Professor Richard Coker, Emeritus Professor of Public Health at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, states: *"The risk of exposure of Covid-19 to prisoners and staff when new cases enter a prison is far, far greater than the risk to individuals in the wider community."*

Professor Coker goes on to state: *"Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, poor ventilation in a prison will likely increase the speed with which an epidemic unfolded, even if the number of cases cumulatively remained unchanged. Despite the measures taken, including the restriction to longer periods to their cells, the limitations on the movements into and between prisons, the challenges in preventing prisoners from becoming exposed, are likely almost insurmountable, in my opinion. Action to address these issues in prisons is needed extremely urgently."*

The action UCU is asking you to take is to cease with immediate effect the skeleton staffing rotas within prison education departments. Whilst we acknowledge that it is the view of some Governors and all providers, that maintaining education provision during this crisis is desirable, this now has to come second to preservation of the health and safety not only of our members and their learners, but also for our colleagues in the POA.

Every staff member who passes through the gate risks taking in or taking away to their homes and communities, the virus. The hierarchy of control in these circumstances has to be remote off-site delivery of education, anything other than that is, in light of the evidence, reckless.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding this request as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

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Cc:

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