



**The Professional Trades Union for Prison,
Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers**

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Dear Colleagues

COVID 19

I wish to relay to you my assurances that your safety and well-being at work is my top priority and I will not waiver in my support for you all at this difficult time.

I have been made aware of plans in the Youth Custody Estate to open education classrooms so small numbers of prisoners can access this service.

I wish to make it clear to you that under no circumstances should any form of education in classrooms or any other facility take place in any of our Prisons.

The COVID 19 Operational Guidance is clear. There should be no association, large gatherings of prisoners, gym, non-essential workshops or education. Only vital services should be observed which include feeding, phone calls, showers and exercise in the open air. At all times social distancing should be observed.

Opening education classrooms places prisoners, teachers and their families and Prison Officers and their families and loved ones at an unacceptable risk.

COVID 19 does not discriminate or respect good intentions.

We could not possibly replicate the schooling Services currently accessed by key workers children or vulnerable young people in the community because the confined spaces that prisons are subject to inherit too many risks.

Allowing even a small concession or relaxation of necessary restrictions during what will see a peak in the spread of Coronavirus over the next few weeks will place you all at an imminent risk.

The safety of you and your loved ones is non-negotiable.

I have also been informed that some Governors are attempting to justify this proposed practice by instructing staff that without education opening the PP Bonus scheme will not be available.

This is inaccurate. The scheme is in place to build resilience so we can deliver essential services when staffing levels inevitably deplete.

If you wish to do so you may volunteer for the bonus scheme.

The more staff we have on duty the more we will be able to allow prisoners access to essential services, and the more interaction you will be able to have with the young people in your care enabling you to reduce tensions and give them reassurance and support.

Education is not an essential service and teaching staff should not be on site as they are not key workers and can work at home producing activity packs that Prison Officers can deliver to prisoners.

You should note that I have the support of the teaching unions in ensuring this proposal is abandoned.

For the avoidance of doubt education classes should not go ahead for any reason until further notice.

Do not place yourself in unnecessary danger. The threat of COVID 19 is imminent and real.

HMPPS have recently confirmed, after the intervention of your NEC, that the status quo position will be maintained throughout the YCS estate and any such plans will not go ahead.

Please ensure this information is relayed to all your members and the strict restrictions currently in place are adhered to for the safety of all.

Keep supporting each other and work safely.

Our unity will see us through.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Fairhurst', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MARK FAIRHURST
National Chair