



Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann  
Irish Prison Service

## **Q&A on Positive Covid-19 cases in Irish Prisons**

### **08<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

The Irish Prison Service is currently managing a number of outbreaks of Covid-19 in Irish Prisons. There are current outbreaks in Wheatfield, Loughan House, Portlaoise and Mountjoy Prisons.

This news may be a cause for concern especially if you have a family member or friend currently imprisoned in one of these prisons. The Irish Prison Service would like to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to stop the spread of the virus within the prisons.

I am sure you may have questions about the health and safety of your loved ones. We will try to answer some of those questions below.

### **How will I know if my loved one has Covid-19?**

If you have a family member who has been confirmed as positive for Covid-19, and you are registered as their next of kin, you will have been contacted. Prisoners who test positive are offered the opportunity to speak with their family members themselves. If necessary, our staff will contact families if any cases arise. There is no need to ring the prison to find out if someone has Covid-19, you will be contacted.

### **Are there cases of Covid-19 all over the prison?**

So there are only a small number of cases in each location and testing of prisoners will be completed to identify if there are any further cases.

**Will I still be able to have my phone calls?**

Yes, due to the restriction we have to make some changes to the prison regime but we realise how important family contact is. Phone calls will continue as normal if possible however, there may be some restrictions with regard to prisoners in precautionary isolation but we are trying to ensure that they continue to have access to a telephone.

**Will prisoners still be able to access services such as drug counsellors or psychology?**

Normally yes, but similar to communities the services are currently reduced and will return when it is safe to do so. Psychology support is available over the phone, as is addiction support through Merchant's Quay Ireland counsellors who will also operate a phone support service.

**Can prisoners still go to school or work and training?**

Similar to communities, the schools are currently closed. Prisoners involved in essential work and training activities will still be able to participate. We hope to return to a more normal regime after everyone has been tested for the second time.

**Will they be restricted to their rooms all day with nothing to do?**

We will be allowing people out their rooms for showering. We have also provided Netflix and this will provide some entertainment in the evening.

**Can I still put money into their shop account?**

Yes, through the usual methods. Prisoners will have access to Tuckshop facilities.

**What happens if they fall ill from Covid-19 and need to see a doctor or nurse?**

As you probably know, we have an excellent healthcare team on site in our prisons and if anyone needs medical support our staff will be available. We will be monitoring anyone who tested positive regularly and we assure you we will provide them with excellent care if they are unwell.

**Do you have enough PPE and hand sanitizer to allow people to keep safe?**

We have been preparing for Covid-19 since January 2020 and the Prison Service has purchased large stocks of PPE and hand sanitizer.

**Where can I get more information?**

We will continue to publish updates on the situation on our website [www.irishprisons.ie](http://www.irishprisons.ie) and on our twitter page [@irishprisons](https://twitter.com/irishprisons)

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