



1st April 2020

JOINT LETTER FROM CHAIR OF CJVSF AND SPS DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

COVID-19 - IMPLICATIONS FOR SPS AND THIRD SECTOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The health and wellbeing of the people who live and work in Scotland's prisons, including third sector staff, will always be SPS' priority. This is why SPS had to take the unprecedented decision to help prevent the spread of COVID 19 by stopping visits to Scotland's prisons from 24th March 2020.

The shared framework between SPS and the third sector organisations who support people in prison and families outlines the values and distinctive role the third sector plays in achieving justice and wider public policy outcomes.

SPS and CJVSF are writing to you jointly to provide you with an update on the SPS response to COVID 19 and what that means for working arrangements between SPS and the third sector.

Communications

SPS and CJVSF recognise that communication is crucial to the response to COVID 19 and that our channels of communication and messages need to be clear and consistent.

In accordance with our long standing agreement, SPS will continue to liaise with the third sector through the CJVSF and updates will also be available through the SPS website. The dedicated CJVSF web page [cjvsf/hot-topics/covid-19/](https://www.cjvsf.org.uk/hot-topics/covid-19/) will also be a key tool.

CJVSF and SPS would encourage any prison related issues to be fed in to the CJVSF team: Chris.McCully@ccpscotland.org or Laura.Mulcahy@Ccpscotland.org. The team will then ensure that any prison related issues can be fed directly into the SPS COVID 19 team for consideration. SPS has also put in place dedicated liaison arrangements with the Public Social Partnerships and this is welcomed by CJVSF.

The suspension of prison visits

As referred to above, prison visits have now been suspended across all establishments except for critical agent visits, although it is anticipated that these types of visits will reduce rapidly in the weeks ahead. While this means that face to face engagement will cease until such times as circumstances change, SPS is committed to ensuring that the third sector can continue to play its distinctive role in supporting the needs of the people in and leaving SPS' care. An update on key work is as follows:

- **Maintaining contact with people in SPS care will need to be done through the email a prisoner system.** Third sector organisations who wish to maintain contact with those in SPS care will require to do so predominantly through the ‘email a prisoner’ system. This allows emails to be printed off and delivered to people along with their regular mail.
- **Partnership Agreements should be completed.** SPS and CJVSF remain committed to the Partnership Agreements process <http://www.ccpscotland.org/cjvsf/resources/prison-partnership-agreement/>
- **A new SPS Family Helpline has been established to provide support and advice to families of those in SPS care.** Families can call 0131 330 3888. This service will be available Monday - Friday, 9am to 3pm. This is a new service and these hours will be kept under review and may be changed to reflect demand.
- **Interim guidance is in place to prevent homelessness on release.** SPS and Scottish Government have drafted Sustainable Housing on Release (SHORE) and COVID-19 interim guidance which can be found at [SPS- COVID-19](#)
- **DWP are in the process of establishing a dedicated service for prison leavers.** Work Coaches are supporting the overall new claim effort in the community. In the immediate term prison leavers should make an online claim for UC wherever possible. If they are unable to access/use the internet they should utilise the existing telephony claim service – ID can be verified and payment made over the phone. The number to call once they are in the community is 0800 328 5644. If people have no access to the internet or a telephone they may still be able to attend their local job centre – the most vulnerable will be supported in person at job centres. If people are displaying symptoms or are in the group required to self-isolate, then they must not go into a Jobcentre and should use the telephone service. The attached flier is being distributed to prison leavers to inform them about how to make a claim for Universal Credit in the community after they have been released from prison.



DWP- covid-19 flyer
for prison leavers.pc

Support for third sector

Finally, we would also draw attention to the support for the third sector at the website: <https://covid-19.scvo.org.uk/>. This site contains information on the Third Sector Resilience Fund as part of the Scottish Government’s support package for the sector in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Yours faithfully

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