



Peter Dawson
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Dear Peter,

PROJECT CAPPTIVE BRIEFING

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Project CAPPTIVE briefing.

It is incredibly valuable to hear from service users and their families and it is always helpful to have constructive feedback that gives an indication of what is going well, as well as areas where improvements could be made.

There can be no doubt that prisoners and their families have faced significant challenges over recent months. The decision to introduce restrictions in March was not taken lightly and we recognise that the suspension of social visits was particularly difficult for people in our care and for their loved-ones.

We acknowledge the vital role that family ties play in the wellbeing of prisoners and their families. Although we introduced a range of measures to keep prisoners in touch with their families, including £5 free PIN credit a week and locked mobile handsets, we know that this is an area where we need to continue to focus our efforts.

As you are aware we have recognised the value of video calling and worked at speed over the last few months to bring video calling to prisons which had previously never had this technology. The rollout of video calling has proven to be particularly challenging, as we have had to overcome a number of problems with local networks, including ensuring access and dealing with slow speeds. However, as I set out in my letter of 23 July, we are now making rapid progress. Video calling is now available at 74 establishments. By the end of August, the facility will be available to all female prisoners and young people; equipment will be deployed across the entire public estate; and the majority of the adult male estate will have completed their test calls and will be rolling calls out to their whole population. I am of the firm belief that technology has a vital role to play in helping offenders turn their lives round, both within prison and after release.

As we have moved into Stage 3 of the Recovery Framework, prisons have acted swiftly to reintroduce social visits because we recognise how important they are for prisoners and their families. More than 90 prisons have now restarted visits, albeit with certain modifications to ensure safety.

On communication, it is very encouraging to hear that there has been positive feedback and many examples of good practice. We recognise the fundamental importance of providing clear, consistent and proactive information to prisoners and their families. Whilst this has proved challenging in a fast-moving environment, we will consider the report closely to see where improvements could be made.

It is also good to hear that establishments have been involving prisoners in their operational planning. We are determined to learn from the experience of recent months and have established a programme of work to capture and share lessons learned from our ongoing response to Covid-19. We are in the process of consulting service users and staff from across the system and applying a set of evidence and quality criteria to ensure learning adds value, informs planning and practice and helps us to build back better.

I understand the point you raise around inconsistencies across the system and the delays that may be inherent in an overly-centralised system.

The initial HMPPS response to the national lockdown introduced by UK Government in March was to trigger a suite of standardised regime restrictions across the estate, as all prisons simultaneously entered command mode and a Covid-19 Gold Command structure was established to coordinate the national response.

This centralised national response was appropriate to the pace and scale of the threat and allowed us to co-ordinate our response to ensure that establishment plans incorporated the four key regime priorities of: provision of meals, healthcare and medication, prisoner safety and welfare and family contact. However, we recognise that the risk profile has changed and varies greatly in different geographical areas. As such we have mirrored the UK Government response by moving from a national to a localised model of command.

Moving forward, establishment Governors will design and deliver the response to regional outbreaks within prisons or their communities more directly with support from health leads and partner agencies. Though the centre will retain overall responsibility for the Covid-19 response and set the parameters within which Governors operate, the action in establishments will be more locally driven and tailored to meet the risk profile of each outbreak. The model of localised ownership of outbreaks will be mirrored by an equivalent model for locally designed regime delivery so that models for progression and regression are set locally based on the current risk profile.

Thank you again for sending the briefing. I am grateful for your continued engagement and challenge in this area. Please do continue to keep me up to date on the future briefings on Regimes, Progression, Health and Innovation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP