**Prisons and Probation Ombudsman- Covid-19 Update**

Following the latest government advice about the national response to COVID-19, we have had to make some urgent changes to the work of the PPO.

These changes are temporary and we will review them regularly so that we can return to our normal working as soon as possible. We have kept our office open for as long as we could but, unfortunately, it is no longer possible to do so and the changes we outline below are necessary and unavoidable.

* We will no longer be able to read and reply to letters from prisoners, including those wishing to complain to us. Any letters sent to us will not be opened until we are able to access our offices, although letters will be safely stored until that time.
* We will not be able to send replies to any letters we have already received, and we will not be able to send reports of our investigations into the complaints we are currently dealing with.
* We will continue to operate our PPO mailbox so that families, and others, can contact us. It may take us longer than usual to respond to emails but we will do our best to reply quickly or to send a holding reply.
* Our telephone answering machine will still operate as normal and all messages will be listened to on the next working day, as now.

Our regular visits to prisons will not take place until Government advice is that we can resume them. Our planned programme of visits to talk to groups of prisoners and the visits we do to investigate complaints will all start again as soon as it is allowed.

We are sorry that we have had to reduce the service we provide to people in prison, especially at this time. We assure you that we have tried to find ways to continue but it simply is not possible. We will resume the services at the earliest opportunity.



**Sue McAllister CB**

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

March 2020