



**Notes from the Reducing Reoffending Third Sector Advisory Group (RR3) Special Interest Group on
Covid-19
Wednesday 28th April 2021 via Zoom**

Attendees:

Anne Fox, Clinks (chair)
Will Downs, Clinks (notes)
Martin Blakebrough, Kaleidoscope
Francesca Cooney, Prisoners' Education Trust
Alice Dawnay, Switchback (co-opted)
Helen Dyson, Nacro
Tracie Eadie, RECOOP (co-opted)
Neil Grutchfield, Synergy Theatre (co-opted)
Alasdair Jackson, Recycling Lives
Andy Keen-Downs, Pact (co-opted)
Simon Ruding, TiPP (co-opted)
Emma Wells, Community Chaplaincy Association
Kate Paradine, Women in Prison
Vicki Markiewicz, Change Grow Live
Mellissa Berry, Include (co-opted)
Phil Maguire, Prison Radio Association (co-opted)
Khatuna Tsintsadze, Zahid Mubarak Trust
Kate Davies, NHSE

Apologies:

Peter Dawson, Prison Reform Trust
Vicki Cardwell, Spark Inside (co-opted)
Burcu Borysik, Revolving Doors Agency (co-opted)
Pippa Goodfellow, Alliance for Youth Justice (co-opted)
Paul Grainge, RECOOP
Linda Patterson, User Voice (co-opted)
Tracy Wild, Langley House Trust

Update on the vaccination programme in prisons¹

- Kate Davies, NHS England (NHSE) gave an update on the vaccination programme in prisons. [She previously attended a meeting of the group in February 2021](#) and said the situation in prisons has improved significantly since then.
- NHSE has made good progress delivering vaccinations to people in cohorts 2 – 9 in prisons. Everyone in those cohort groups have been offered the vaccine and there has been a take

¹ Please note all figures and percentages included in these notes were accurate at the time of the meeting but are subject to change and update.

up of 90%. NHSE has this week started to offer vaccinations to cohort 10 (those aged 40 – 49). This is broadly in line with progress in the community.

- Local outbreaks continue to create logistical challenges in individual prisons and so there will continue to be some local variation in vaccination progress.
- Around 24,000 people in prison have had their first dose and just under 2,000 have had their second dose.
- NHSE is keeping a close eye on data and trends around uptake and is doing much work to provide information on vaccinations to those who may be hesitant, including through prison radio, peer support, prison chaplaincies etc. Kate said conversations with peers or voluntary sector organisations can be crucial in people overcoming their hesitancy around the vaccine.
- Pfizer is not available in prisons due to logistical and storage challenges. Oxford AstraZeneca has been used in prisons to date. Strategies and approvals are in place where people who have received the Pfizer vaccine as their first dose will receive Oxford AstraZeneca as their second dose in prison.
- Following recent changes to guidance in the community around the use of Oxford AstraZeneca amongst under 30s, NHSE is ensuring that it has sufficient supplies of the Moderna vaccine for cohorts 11 (30 – 39) and 12 (18 – 30).
- There are still a small number of live outbreaks in prisons, though the number has decreased significantly in recent weeks.
- An attendee asked whether there was any specific update for prisons in Wales. Kate said progress was largely in line with England. Kate offered to put members of the group in touch with colleagues at NHS Wales.
- The national incident level for the NHSE Covid-19 response has been reduced from level 4 to level 3, meaning that NHSE is now restoring services in prison. This will also mean more attention can be given to existing programmes such as RECONNECT, the CSTR programme and work in courts. Kate said the legislation currently being brought to parliament to place Integrated Care Systems on statutory footing also presented an opportunity to look at health equity and place-based approaches to health.

Questions and discussion

How will NHSE ensure that people who receive their first dose in prison will receive their second dose after release?

- Kate Davies said that a large number of people going in and out of custody will be in prison for a short time and therefore the data system is vital. The foundry system is used to ensure that when someone leaves prison their GP in the community gets notified and automatically a date for their second dose will be generated. Kate said the voluntary sector could play an important role in helping people to attend appointments for their second dose.
- An attendee said many people leaving prison might not have a GP and therefore it was important that probation and other support agencies are linked into processes for second vaccinations. They also said the transition to the new probation model and case load transfer from CRCs to new providers would create further challenges.

- Kate Davies said that quite often people do have a GP registered somewhere, but might not know about it and this was an opportunity to ensure people leaving prison are registered.
- The group discussed the challenges with service users receiving notifications for their vaccination appointments from GPs. These are usually done at relatively short notice via text or written letters, and people leaving prison often change addresses and phone numbers. A member of the group said suggested vaccination teams could come into voluntary sector services to vaccinate people who may struggle to keep appointments or be notified by their GP.
- An attendee said the Welsh government has established an equity group looking at all the groups of people that may access services differently. Kate Davies said that primary care clinical networks are doing similar work, including outreach to find particular groups of people, such as those with autism, learning disability or vulnerabilities.

Have NHSE planned for any potential hesitancy amongst people in the criminal justice system who are offered different vaccines for their first and second doses?

- Kate Davies said most people in the criminal justice system will have received the same vaccine for first and second doses and this will continue to be the case for the majority of people. NHSE will follow clinical guidance on when people can receive different vaccines for their first and second doses.

The vast majority of people in prison serving short sentences are currently below the age of eligibility for vaccination. This group also has a much higher risk of being released homeless into the community and returning to prison in a short space of time, presenting a real risk of transmission between custody and community. What approach are NHSE taking with this cohort?

- Kate said that NHSE continue to follow the approach and guidance set by JCVI. NHSE and other agencies have pushed for prioritisation for people in prison to be vaccinated as part of a whole prison approach and she understands the strength of feeling amongst the sector around this. Kate welcomed the JCVI's recent decision to prioritise homeless men and women.

How many reported cases of long-covid there has there been in prisons?

- Some of the symptoms of long-covid aren't recognised by patients and symptoms such as weight loss, breathing difficulties and fatigue can have many causes. It's important that NHS staff don't miss cases. As NHSE restore services in prisons there is a big priority over waiting times, as there are many patients across the estate that have long-term conditions either pre or post-Covid that require intervention and access to elective care at hospital. NHSE are prioritising their needs and access to care.
- A member of the group welcomed this and said that the principle of equity of care for people in prison is important, as there has been increased scrutiny amongst the media during Covid-19 over what people in prison are able to access vis a vis those in the community. It has never been more important to challenge dangerous narratives that people in prison don't deserve equal access to healthcare. Kate said she agreed and supported this.

How will NHSE prioritise mental health in its plans to restore services? What work has been done to evidence the impact on mental health of restricted regimes during Covid-19?

- NHSE plan to run an audit on the impact on mental health of Covid-19 through providers and trusts. There has been a large piece of work conducted with the Centre for Mental Health that will be published after the pre-election period.

As services are restored in prison, will staff working for providers be required to be vaccinated to access the prison?

- Kate said there will be no form of vaccination passport required for providers.
- Members of the group wanted to place on record their gratitude to Kate and her team and the huge amount of work they have done in the past year. Kate thanked the group and invited them to contact her with further questions.

ENDS.