



Ministry
of Justice

The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair of the Justice Select Committees
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 May 2020

Dear Bob,

Statement of Principles from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CPT have produced a Statement of Principles, which relates to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. The CPT have asked me to circulate the document to relevant stakeholders and I thought it would be of interest to you and your Committee.

We are working hard to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the prison system as part of the national plan to protect the NHS and save lives. This involves protecting the vulnerable in our care and our staff while maintaining safety and order and managing public protection risks. We are implementing a strategy of compartmentalisation in prisons: isolating the symptomatic, shielding the vulnerable and quarantining new arrivals in reverse cohorting units.

To better enable prisons to implement this strategy, we are increasing headroom in the estate. To this end, we are enabling some early releases of prisoners coming towards the ends of their sentences, as well as some pregnant prisoners, women in Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) and elderly and medically vulnerable prisoners. We are also increasing the capacity of the existing prison estate and expediting remand hearings to reduce the unsentenced population. Our strategy is informed by with Public Health England (PHE) guidance and has shown early signs of success in limiting the transmission of COVID-19.

Whilst we have unfortunately had to restrict prison regimes and cancel visits in order to reduce transmission of the virus, we have been proactive in offering digital solutions to keep prisoners in contact with their families during this difficult time, including the provision of secure mobile phones to those prisoners without access to in-cell telephony and a reduction in the cost of phone calls.

Yours ever

RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP