

COVID-19

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE IN CUSTODY – 21 APRIL 2020

EARLY RELEASE

As you know, COVID-19 is impacting all areas of life, including our prison estate. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) is following the national advice provided by Health Protection Scotland and the Scottish Government to prevent the spread of the virus.

This is a challenging time for everyone living and working in our prisons. With necessary regime restrictions in place, the SPS has been working with Scottish Government to look at ways in which we can support you through this challenging time. Last week, we told you of the Cabinet Secretary's intention to introduce mobile phones as quickly as is practically possible to allow you to maintain vital family contact.

EARLY RELEASE

Today, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has announced plans to allow a number of short-term prisoners nearing the end of their time in custody to be released early, under measures designed to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

The scheme will be limited to those sentenced to 18 months or less and who on 30 April 2020 have 90 days or less left to serve.

The release of prisoners will be subject to a number of exclusions to ensure public protection. For example, life sentence prisoners or those who have received sentences with convictions for sexual, domestic abuse or terrorism offences will not be eligible, along with some other groups.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME

- At present, there are between 300 and 450 prisoners who may be considered for early release across the prison estate. This does not mean that those prisoners will be automatically released; they will be considered for release.
- There is no application process so you do not need to do anything at this time. The SPS will identify those who may be eligible and, following consideration of appropriate risk factors, the Governor may make a decision to release an individual.
- An individual will not be released where the Governor makes a determination that, if released, that individual would pose an immediate risk of harm to an identified person.
- The early release scheme is due to begin on 30 April and last for 28 days. Further details on how this will be provided as soon as possible.