



Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann  
Irish Prison Service



Crois Dhearg na hÉireann  
Irish Red Cross



etbi  
Education and Training  
Boards Ireland  
Boird Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann

## CBHFA Response to COVID-19

Irish Red Cross inmate volunteers are trained in Infection Control as part of the Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) Programme every year. More specifically, every year inmate volunteers learn proper hand-washing techniques, correct sneezing and coughing etiquette, and in all prisons a colour coded bucket and mop system has been introduced. This has all contributed to cleaner prisons and a prevention of infection. The volunteers then disseminate this information to their peers within their prison community through awareness campaigns and landing demonstrations.

Before the coronavirus landed in Ireland, volunteers learned about the symptoms of the virus and the dangers that it carried. Volunteers were able to use this knowledge to **peer educate** the rest of their prison community before the virus began to spread in Ireland. Furthermore, this allowed for each prison population to be prepared and apply effective infection control measures in their daily routines. As the virus became more serious and the country went into lockdown, supports that the volunteers would usually have (such as teachers, psychologists, chaplains and addiction counsellors) were no longer able to enter the prisons. Therefore, the Irish Red Cross inmate volunteers took a very strong leadership role to assist Irish Prison Service staff with the challenges of COVID-19. Volunteers continued to educate their peers in effective infection control measures, spoke to inmates facing mental health challenges, assisted with the distribution of information and education packs, and did their best to keep up positive morale throughout each of the prisons.

Irish Red Cross also introduced two separate newsletters to be distributed to prisoners each week; (1) COVID-19 Prisoner Information Newsletter; and (2) Living in Cell Newsletter. All prisoners received the information newsletter each week, and those cocooning, isolating and in quarantine received the Living in Cell newsletter in addition to the weekly COVID-19 newsletter. This provided prisoners with updated information in regards to COVID-19, education, and services they could access, in addition to exercises and activities they could do during this time. Irish Red Cross inmate volunteers assisted with translating the newsletters in several languages and distributed these newsletters every week to the rest of their prison communities.

The activities of the Irish Red Cross inmate volunteers help to contribute to zero positive cases amongst prisoners across the country for more than six months.

*\* See below for examples of the COVID-19 General Information Newsletter and the Living in Cell Newsletter.*

# COVID 19 Prisoner Information

Thursday, 24 April 2020 (Edition 7)

Irish Prison Service

What you are doing is working!



There are currently **NO positive cases** of the virus in any Prison as of the date of this newsletter!



Keep going & well done!

## Coronavirus COVID-19 How to Prevent



## Education Update

If you have been following the news over the past few days you may have heard that there has been some updates regarding the Leaving Cert in Ireland. If you are registered to sit Leaving or Junior Cert exams or are studying through the open university please see below:



**Leaving Certificate:** The 2020 Leaving Certificate written examinations previously scheduled to start on 29 July have been postponed. Leaving Cert students will now be offered Calculated Grades. They will also possibly have the opportunity to sit the exams at a later stage when it is safe to do so. Teachers will be in touch with Leaving Cert students in prisons as soon as possible about this.



**Junior Certificate:** The Government announced on 29<sup>th</sup> of April that Junior Cert exams for adult learners have been replaced with School based exams in Autumn 2020. When we have more details about these, we will let you know!

**Open University:** Students have likely been in contact with somebody from Education already, but if not – please speak to the School or Class Officer and they can get in touch with your OU Teacher.

## Warning: Overdose Awareness

For those of you who use illicit drugs on a regular basis and have stopped (either through detox or not having access to illicit drugs), there is potentially a significant danger to your health if you start using again because your tolerance level will be low.



You cannot go back to using the same amount, your body is not used to it and the chance of overdose can be very high.



### Overdose Signs:

- No response when you call their name or try to wake them.
- Very shallow breathing- you may hear what sounds like deep snoring or gurgling- this is the heart rate slowing down and the lungs starting to fail.
- If you can't wake someone – **DON'T LET THEM SLEEP IT OFF**
- Blue lips and fingertips, floppy arms and legs.

**PRESS THE LIGHT AND CALL FOR HELP & Place in Recovery Position (See Picture).**

If you are now drug-free, use this opportunity to stay off drugs and use the supports available to you from MQI Drug Counsellors, Healthcare and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

# Prisoners Living in Cell COVID 19

10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (Edition 11)

Irish Prison Service



## Not Forgetting You!

This week's Newsletter includes exercises that you can do while *Living in Cell*, as well as helpful tips to help you cope with frustration and anxiety during this time.

The next edition of this newsletter will be distributed on Friday 24 July.

## Teleservices Still Available!

Psychology Service: CALL 65
IASIO Resettlement Service: CALL 65
Chaplaincy Service: CALL 65
MQI Addiction: CALL 66

If you are in isolation or quarantine, talk to somebody about how you feel.

Use the **teleservices** to speak with somebody and receive support!

## Importance of Sleep



**Sleep and mental health are closely connected.** Lack of sleep can affect your mental health negatively, and those who are struggling with their mental health are more likely to experience difficulties sleeping.

### Changes to Routine

- ❖ Caffeine and nicotine are **stimulants**, which speed up your heart rate and thinking. Try to avoid these substances a few hours before trying to fall asleep.



### Relaxation Techniques

- ❖ Meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation exercises can counter anxiety and racing thoughts. Try using exercises from previous newsletters.



## New Testing & Quarantine Arrangements

Newly committed prisoners who are quarantined as a precaution will be tested **approximately 6 days** after commitment.

If the test returns a **negative result**, the prisoner will be **removed from quarantine**, so long as the prisoner has no flu-like symptoms and/or has not been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case.

If you are required to undertake a Section 42 Garda escort, so long as you maintain your PPE at all times on that escort, you will be **permitted to return to the stage you were at in terms of your quarantine**. If, however, you do not maintain your PPE or if there is any concern that this may not have happened, you will be returned to Day 1 of quarantine.