

18 March 2020

Ian Bickers
Deputy Director, Head of Education, Employment and Industries Group
Directorate of Safety and Rehabilitation
Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
Southern House
London
CRO 1XG

Dear Ian,

Re: Health and safety of prison education staff during the Covid-19 crisis

I am writing to you as the as the managing authority for the Prison Education Framework (PEF) to escalate a request I made to the PEF providers on 13 March 2020.

In light of the continuing rapid spread of coronavirus across the UK, and the Prime Minister's most recent statement calling for avoidance of all social contact, I am writing to urge the government to adopt this as an official directive covering all prison education departments as a matter of urgency. It is clear that in a crisis situation, prison education should be deemed a non-essential service.

Our request is that in accordance with government guidance and given the increased risk of transmission within prison establishments, that all prison education departments are closed on a temporary basis and prison education staff should be provided work to do remotely. This is in order to protect the health and safety of our members.

We are clear that in all instances, special leave should be paid including to those staff on casual/sessional contracts on a no detriment basis.

This unprecedented COVID-19 situation presents significant challenges to all of the members that UCU represents but for prison educators in particular given the environment that they have to work in. We have also written to the secretary of state for education with the same request for college and university workers.

We recognise that this a difficult request for PEF providers to make themselves, because of the potential impact on their contracts. It would therefore be

UCU's general secretary is Jo Grady

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helpful if you could provide the assurance that no-detriment applies here and that there will no penalties by HMPPS for non-delivery of teaching hours arising due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Lastly, we would like to ask that HMPPS issue or re-issue clear guidance in relation to contingency planning. We are disturbed by reports that some prison governors have suggested that our members could be asked to undertake other duties such as delivering medication, meals or cleaning. Our position is that this is completely unacceptable and under no circumstances should our members be involved in any other duties than delivering education.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Grady". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Jo Grady

cc. Kathryn Ball, HMPPS