

Prison estate expanded to protect NHS from coronavirus risk

- First wave of 500 temporary cells to be installed at prisons
- Extra prison space will limit spread of Coronavirus in jails
- Builds on Government's action to protect staff, prisoners and the NHS

Across the estate Prisons are moving towards single-cell accommodation, as much as possible, to limit the spread of infection and the number of deaths.

Today's action marks the start of work at six priority jails over the coming weeks and, combined with the [recently announced early release](#) of low-risk offenders, it will increase space in prisons and help reduce the spread of Coronavirus.

The project is then expected to be expanded to additional prisons. This follows public health advice that prisons present a unique environment where rapid outbreaks of the virus could place a significant strain on local NHS services.

While this temporary accommodation remains within the existing, secure, prison estate and will be monitored by staff, as normal, only lower-risk category C and D prisoners will be held in the temporary units, following careful risk assessment.

Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Our absolute priority is to protect the NHS and save lives, which is why we have taken unprecedented steps to stop the spread of Coronavirus in our jails.

Creating additional space in the existing estate, alongside measures to limit prisoner movement and releasing low-risk offenders, will help prevent our NHS being overwhelmed.

The first wave of sites have been chosen because they have the highest number of shared cells, lack in-cell sanitation and house high numbers of vulnerable prisoners.

Installation of temporary accommodation will start this week at HMP North Sea Camp, with HMPs Littlehey, Hollesley Bay, Highpoint, Moorland, Lindholme and Humber to follow.

Further prisons could be chosen based on whether the extra accommodation is needed and if there is sufficient space.

To protect prison staff, prisoners and safeguard the NHS, the Ministry of Justice is:

- Shielding vulnerable prisoners through social distancing measures
- Re-deploying staff, where appropriate, from headquarters into operational roles
- Working with the judiciary to expedite sentencing hearings for those on remand to reduce the numbers being held in custody
- Releasing [risk-assessed prisoners](#) who are within two months of their release date, with strict conditions
- Pregnant [women in custody](#) who do not pose a high risk of harm to the public will be temporarily released from prison.