



HM Prison &
Probation Service



Testing for contact during social visits

I am really pleased to say that we are going to be allowing physical contact in visits for visitors who have a negative COVID test.

We have been piloting testing for contact in some prisons and had some really positive feedback. We know that not having contact with your loved ones has been one of the hardest parts of COVID so we are pleased these results from these pilots mean we can now improve visits for you.

You will be able to take your test at home on the day of your visit and bring the evidence of a negative result with you.

The person you are visiting will have been tested within 24 hours of the visit also.

At HMP Featherstone we will be starting this from Tuesday August 17th 2021.

We know that not everyone will feel comfortable with physical contact now. As long as you don't have any COVID symptoms, you can still come into the prison and see the person you are visiting without having physical contact.

You will not need to take a test for a visit without physical contact, however testing helps prevent COVID cases from coming into the prison. This will help us protect people in prison and keep activities, like visits, open.

Children under 11 can have contact with the person they are visiting without taking a test.

COVID remains with us and there are increases in cases in the community. If we have an outbreak at the prison, we may need to bring back social distancing or pause visits while we manage the outbreak.

Further information

I am happy to take a test. What do I need to do?

You should take your test at home on the day of your visit and bring evidence of a negative result with you, either an email or a text from the NHS. You can get testing kits from local pharmacies or use any test that you may get from testing through other means such as the workplace or your children's school.

Do I have to take a test?

No, this is voluntary and we know that some don't feel ready for close contact with many people at the moment.

If you don't take a test, you can still come into the prison but you will not be able to have any contact with the person you are visiting.

Taking a test helps us to prevent COVID outbreaks in the prison. If we have an outbreak, it may lead to us restricting our regimes again which we want to avoid where possible. By taking a test, you will help to protect your loved ones and the wider prison – thank you.

The only time you should not take a test is if you have had a positive PCR (lab) test in the last 14 days. This is because you may return a false positive. This is different from the current community guidance which is 90 days.

What if I test positive?

Your visit will have to be postponed and you will need to book a PCR (lab) test in the community to confirm the result.

The person you are visiting will be told what has happened and we will let them know that the visit can be rebooked using the normal visits booking process. This will not be taken out of their visits allocation. The same action will be taken if the person you are visiting has a positive test result.

We know that missing your visit will be disappointing, but by spotting potential cases before they come into a prison, we can prevent potential spread of the virus and help keep people safe.

Do my children need to take part in the testing?

Children under the age of 11 don't need to take part in the testing and can have physical contact with the person they are visiting anyway. This is the same in all prisons.

Secondary school children will be offered a test, in line with community testing. This is voluntary and they will still get their visit if they do not wish to take a test but they will not be able to have contact with the person they are visiting.

Will I still need to follow social distancing measures in prison?

While you will be able to have contact with the person you are visiting, you will still need to follow the rest of the COVID prevention measures in place. This includes social distancing from people you aren't visiting and wearing a mask.