

Infection Control Protocol – COVID19 Thematic Inspections

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1. Introduction

The Office of the Inspector of Prisons is committed to carrying out COVID-19 Thematic Inspections of the twelve Irish Prisons. This document outlines a plan to complete these inspections to a process which is in line with Public Health advice and aims to protect the safety of people in prison and staff working in prisons by limiting the risk of COVID-19 disease transmission.

This plan is kept under constant review to ensure that plans and protocols are in line with current official advice and guidelines including, but not limited to, those available at www.gov.ie, www.hse.ie and the Irish Prison Service.

At a high level, the plan aims to reduce the amount of time spent on site in prisons and to limit the number of inspectors required on site, while ensuring assessment of compliance with all the Focus Areas outlined in the Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland. This is achieved by a streamlined inspection framework specifically developed for this purpose and an efficient inspection schedule. This protocol is intended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 disease transmission in line with Public Health advice.

2. Decision to Continue with OIP Inspection Schedule

A decision tree is in place to outline in what circumstances inspections are to be re-scheduled or amended. This is in relation to COVID-19 disease outbreaks¹ in prisons and/or in the event of the identification of symptoms in an inspector.

¹ As per the HPSC website, the current COVID-19 outbreak case definition is:

- A cluster/outbreak, with two or more cases of laboratory confirmed COVID-19 infection regardless of symptom status. This includes cases with symptoms and cases who are asymptomatic. OR
- A cluster/outbreak, with one laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, and at least one additional case of illness with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection (as per the COVID-19 case definition)

Decision Tree for Inspections

#	Action	Outbreak	
		Yes	No
1	Chief Inspector confirms status of outbreak in prison with IPS DG, in the two days leading up to inspection	Inspection Rescheduled*	Proceed to next action
2	Chief Inspector and/or Senior Inspector confirm outbreak status ongoing (IPS updates), in the two days leading up to an inspection	Inspection Rescheduled*	Proceed to next action
3	On each morning of the onsite inspection, prior to travelling to the prison, each Inspector completes the symptom checklist and temperature check, and notifies Lead Inspector and Administration Team if symptom(s) present.**	Where symptom(s) are indicated in any Inspector of the team, the inspection is rescheduled or an alternative inspector is assigned.***	Commence Inspection

* Where there are concerns that a significant risk exists, the OIP may deem it necessary to conduct an onsite inspection in a prison where there is an active COVID-19 outbreak, as declared by the Irish Prison Service. In these instances the advance notice period will be extended to 48 hours to allow for preparatory communications between the prison and the OIP.

** Where symptoms are indicated, the Inspector should follow the directions in the symptom checklist and temperature check protocol.

*** A new Inspector may be reassigned to allow the inspection to take place, if this occurs on the first day of an inspection and the other inspectors are not deemed to be close contacts.

3. Symptom, Temperature and Contact Checklist and Protocol

Inspectors are advised to adhere to all Public Health advice in relation to COVID-19 and take the necessary precautions. Inspectors are also required to act in line with the prison policies on infection prevention and risk management.

A symptom checklist which includes a temperature check and recent contact information will be completed by each inspector prior to entry into a prison. It aims to provide an assurance that inspectors presenting with symptoms or indicated as a potential suspected or confirmed case do not enter a prison. The checklist is based on the symptoms and questions outlined on the HSE and Department of Health websites. Actions to be taken arising from identification of a symptom or recent contact are outlined below.

Inspectors will notify the Chief or Senior Inspector of their checklist outcome **by email** each morning of an inspection, before traveling to the prison.

Symptom, Temperature and Contact Checklist and Protocol

On each morning of the onsite inspection, prior to travelling to the prison, each inspector completes the questions below:

If you have any of the following symptoms, please follow next steps:

- A fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- A new cough – this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste - this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you do not have symptoms you may still need to restrict your movements and follow next steps if you:

- Are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Live with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19, but you feel well
- Arrive in Ireland from another country, unless you're coming from a green region or Northern Ireland

Next steps:

1. Notify Senior Inspector and admin team, this is to allow for the rescheduling of the inspection / reassignment of a new inspector.
2. Contact Chief Inspector to inform about situation.
3. Restrict your movements and follow Public Health advice.

4. PPE

Personal Protective Equipment will be available for each Inspector. The following outlines the PPE items to be used during the course of an inspection.

#	Item	Recommended Use
1	Face masks (FFP2)	Use at all times when in the prison, regardless of social distancing or time spent interacting with a person
2	Gloves	Use when physically interacting with surfaces (for example, files), a new pair to be worn for each task
3	Full PPE	To be worn when isolation/quarantine areas, and in areas where there are confirmed COVID-19 cases
4	Hand sanitiser	Use when access to soap and water is not available
5	Surface wipes	Use after/before touching surfaces without gloves, or when required

The Inspection Team will adhere to IPS and prison guidelines on disposal of PPE materials.

Facial Hair

All persons entering the prison must be cleanly shaven. This is to ensure that the health and wellbeing of all persons is assured when wearing a mask for personal protection, which all members of the OIP are required to do at any time during the inspection.

This is due to the fact that masks utilised require a good seal against the face so that, when you breathe air in, it is drawn into the filter material where the air is cleaned. If there are any gaps around the edges of the mask, 'dirty' air will pass through these gaps and into your lungs. It is therefore very important that you put your mask on correctly and check for a good fit every time.

In exceptional cases an OIP Inspector may be permitted to enter the prison without being cleanly shaven where a doctor's certificate is provided to the Chief Inspector or Senior Inspector outlining clear medical reasons for being unable to shave e.g. a skin condition. The Chief Inspector or Senior Inspector will inform the Governor of the medical certification. Information about the condition will not be shared. In such circumstances where a medication certification is provided, the Inspector must make every reasonable effort to shave all areas which are unaffected by the skin condition in order to facilitate a seal between the skin and the mask, in the event that one must be worn.

Ties

For hygiene reasons, ties will not be worn in the prison.

Shirt

When donning an apron, please ensure that if you are wearing a long-sleeved shirt, the sleeves are rolled up to the elbow.

5. Contact Tracing

For the purposes of contact tracing, the Inspection Team will keep a log of the landings and dates/times visited; these can be made available on request to facilitate CCTV contact tracing.

6. Rapid Reaction Visits

The Chief Inspector may determine situations in which it is necessary to depart from components of the Infection Control Protocol.

7. Training

Prior to the commencement of inspections, each inspector is required to complete the training outlined in the table below. A log of training is maintained by the administration team (email the Administrative Officer to confirm completion of this training). Each inspector is required to complete and confirm completion to the administration team prior to starting their first inspection.

- IPS PPE Donning and Doffing (training provided by IPS via zoom)
- [WHO Handwashing Techniques](#)
- [Temperature Check](#)
- [Respiratory Etiquette](#)

8. Other Measures

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With regards to inspector travel to the prisons, inspectors are advised:

- To use their own private transportation to and from prisons
- To avoid public transport
- To avoid carpooling with other inspectors