

## **Guidance for Governors and Probation Managers: Application of the COVID-19 Special Payments Scheme (NTS 2020-03)**

A range of COVID-19 special payment schemes have been set up for frontline prison and probation staff and for HMPPS staff supporting the frontline. The payments will reward staff who help HMPPS during the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak. These payments are solely in recognition of the unprecedented situation staff are having to deal with and are not a payment for the temporary relaxation of their Health & Safety or Terms and conditions.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with NTS 2020-03

Managers, HRBPs, People and Business Hubs are reminded to ensure that staff who are on sick leave/self-isolating/maternity/career breaks but expected to return within the period of NTS 2020-03 are made aware of this scheme and guidance. If these staff wish to return to work earlier than planned, they will be in scope of the special payments scheme.

This guidance has been compiled further to joint working and engagement between HMPPS and all recognised trade unions. The FAQs include questions raised by trade unions on behalf of members; staff; and other stakeholders. It is important to remind HMPPS stakeholders of the need to continue to engage locally with trade union colleagues with regards to the application of this scheme.

### **General guidance for managers**

It is important that managers continue to ensure that staff wellbeing is not compromised by the introduction of these schemes.

Governors/NPS Manager will ensure:

- that staff wellbeing is kept under regular review and that staff do not work excessive hours and that staff continue to take appropriate breaks (as per the working time regulations);
- that staff have access to occupational health advice and support if needed;
- that staff retain a work/life balance;
- that all available members of staff are aware of the special payments scheme;
- that members of staff on rest days, training etc. are informed so that as far as possible, all staff in scope can volunteer.
- that a deadline for staff to volunteer is provided, which allows sufficient time locally to identify and agree who will be working.
- That rest days are protected unless by agreement, the individual chooses to work a rest day.

### **Forecasting and financial guidance**

To assist forecasting the levels of expenditure that the special payments scheme will generate; finance will send a template to the Senior HRBP in the COVID Command Region / NPS Divisions on a monthly basis to capture individual prison/LDU/AP plans for using the special payments framework. The PGD / DPP will be the approver for the consolidated return from their respective area.

It is acknowledged that we are working in a changing environment and so there will be frequent opportunities for the forecasts to be updated to reflect the most current staffing situation.

To evidence appropriate use and governance, the information from the templates will be compared to COVID related absence data at an establishment/LDU level to ensure use is in line with expectations.

### **FAQs for Governors and Probation Managers**

The following FAQs for Governors and Probation Managers have been drafted following initial queries since the NTS launched on 23 March 2020. These FAQs are in addition to the **Guidance for Staff: Application of the COVID-19 Special Payments Scheme (NTS 2020-03)**.

The FAQs for Governors and Probation Managers will be updated as new questions arise. Please contact your HRBP in the first instance if you have any questions which aren't addressed on the following pages.

**1. Why have the Special Payment Schemes been set up and when are they to be used?**

The Special Payment Schemes to Staff framework has been developed to support the staffing for Prisons and Probation through the COVID-19 outbreak in recognition of the exceptional circumstances in which you are working.

**2. Will I be allocated a budget for the Special Payments Scheme?**

No. Governors and Probation Managers will be asked to work with their HRBP and FBP to forecast their use of the special payments scheme (see page 1 of this guidance) but they will not be expected to manage within a budgetary envelope due to the unpredictability of the impact of COVID19 on the workplace.

Governors and Probation Managers should optimise levels of staff available in this challenging time. Governance arrangements will seek to record planning and usage but not set limits on expenditure.

**3. Can I utilise all options/categories of payment within the Special Payments Scheme?**

Yes. Governors and Probation Managers are expected to use the options according to their requirements (that may change as the weeks progress).

**4. (Prisons Only) Is this the only PP scheme now available?**

Yes, this is the only bonus scheme. All PP can contribute to the COVID19 bonus scheme. Ad hoc PP is still available and can be undertaken without the need to sign up to a scheme.

**5. How will I decide how to allocate the PP/additional hours if I have too many volunteers?**

The working assumption is that Prisons and Probation should optimise the available staffing in these challenging times and offer all staff who wish to opt into the scheme the opportunity to do so, creating resilience for your respective prison/LDU/AP. It is anticipated that offenders will need additional support due to the challenging circumstances we find ourselves in and therefore it is expected that the additional resource should support this through meaningful work.

HRBPs and FBPs will support you in this work. Local TU committees should be updated on PP/additional hours plans and take-up.

**6. Is any member of staff that is normally in an offender facing role, automatically entitled to the special circumstances payment each month? Or is it for if they have gone above and beyond, such as working on an isolation wing?**

The payment is for all staff working in Prisons or Probation in an offender facing role. To receive payment, all staff need to be uploaded to the COVID-19 Bulk Upload form.

**7. If a non-operational member of staff helps in an offender facing role a few times a week, will they be entitled to this payment?**

Governors/Probation Managers will pay a COVID19 Special Circumstances payment to any staff working in an offender facing role and should apply the payment flexibly. For example, this will need to be applied to staff who are not normally in offender-facing roles, but volunteer to do operational support-type additional duties during this period. Thus, the flexibility is for work being carried out during the month, not just once or twice in a week.

**8. Non-operational staff at present are working tirelessly to keep their areas running and ensuring that prisoners have credit, canteen and staff on duty to provide them with the limited regime. Could the Governor/Probation Manager be flexible and give some of these staff the payment?**

The Governor/Probation Manager has the flexibility to make payment if non-operational staff are volunteering to do operational support additional duties during the month.

**9. Will my HRBP/FBP get more guidance about the completion of new SSCL forms and forecast templates?**

Yes, full guidance will be provided to HRBPs and FBPs so that they can support this work and consolidate at PGD/PDD level for onward approval by the existing PGD/PDD for that area (not COVID Silver Regions).