

IRISH PRISON SERVICE - COVID-19 Update of 18 May 2020

Statistics

Prisoners as at 15 may 2020 – total in custody 3,779

Overall cases: 315

Current isolation: 27 (12 precautionary Isolation)

Cleared from isolation: 288

Other: 4 released on bail

Positive results: 0

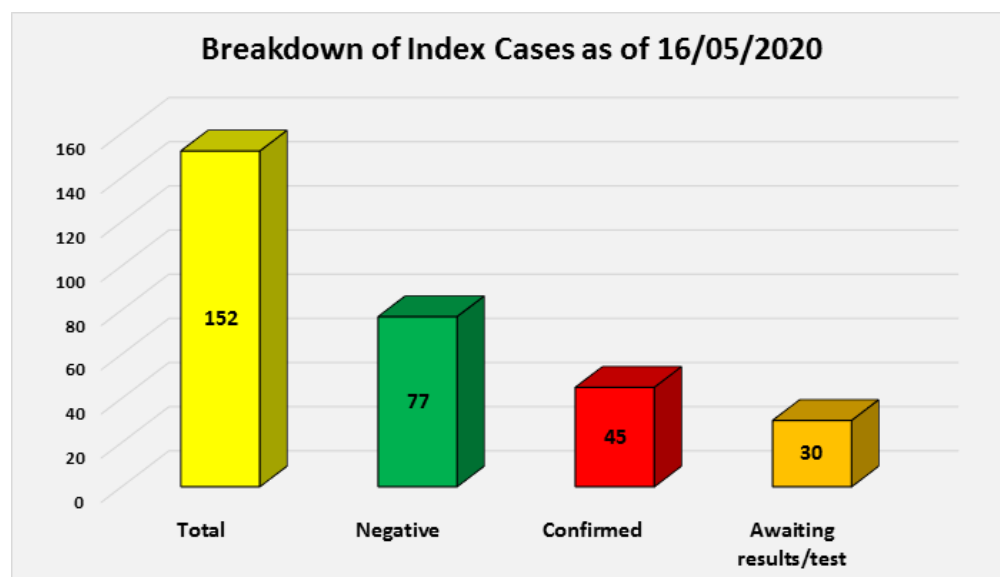
Negative results: 101

Swabs taken & awaiting results: 6

Awaiting testing: 6

Prison	Isolation	Quarantine	Cocooning	TOTAL
Arbour Hill			13	13
Castlerea	1	19	7	27
Cloverhill	15	74	4	93
Cork	4	19	1	24
Dochas		12	36	48
Limerick	3	11	1	15
Loughan				
Midlands	1	9	64	74
Mountjoy		4	3	7
Portlaoise	3		3	6
Shelton			1	1
Wheatfield		3	7	10
TOTAL	27	151	140	318

Staff



Measures in place

A range of measures have been put in place at the outset of this public health emergency to monitor, manage and mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Irish prisons. These measures are based on the public health principles of early detection of cases and physical distancing to reduce the burden of Covid-19. These include:

- screening all staff to a prison
- introduction of video visits following the suspension of physical visits. This service has proven successful and it is intended that this service will continue beyond the coronavirus pandemic.
- placing new committals in quarantine for 14 days
- isolating suspect cases to prevent the risk of ongoing transmission of infection
- cocooning vulnerable prisoners
- comprehensive training for IPS staff
- provision of appropriate PPE across the prison estate
- communicating to staff and prisoners about the Covid-19 measures
- establishing a robust contact tracing model which has been acknowledged by the WHO as best practice.
- The provision of rehabilitative services is a vital to people in custody. The impact of restrictions has curtailed normal access to certain services, however to maintain essential aspects of rehabilitation, the Irish Prison Service reengineered how these services are delivered. The inability to access vital supports such as psychology, drug counselling and resettlement co-ordinators can have a negative impact on rehabilitation opportunities. The Irish Prison Service has introduced new measures to allow prisoners continue to access these vital services. Dedicated phone lines have been set up to allow prisoners to communicate with services and continue to implement physical distancing requirements. Access to in-cell telephones have been made available to prisoners who are unable to leave their cells due to isolation and this allows this cohort to access vital supports.
- Due to the closures of schools in all areas the operations of prisons schools and delivery of education services has also impacted on the prison environment. Education is a vital tool in preventing reoffending and is a key element of the prison day for many prisoners. Access to in-cell learning material has been introduced by the Irish Prison Service to allow prisoners engaging with education to continue their learning. In a number of locations a bespoke prison TV channel is being used to provide content directly to prison cells for information and learning and the Irish Prison Service is at an advance stage of developing a system broadcast educational and support material directly into prison cells in all locations. It is expected that this new service will be rolled out to all locations in the coming weeks.
- Due to the curtailment of services, the loss of physical visits and in some cases the reduction in out of cell time this can have a negative impact on the mental well-being of people in custody. To mitigate against this risk the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service is rolling out “telepsychology” to all locations to provide interventions for prisoners and help with coping strategies. This provides prisoners with a confidential space to talk, express frustration and get important information to help them through the current crisis. This has been an important service to reduce the negative impact on prisoner’s mental health.
- The National Forensic Mental Health Services team provide access to vital services for prisoners with long term mental health issues. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions this has impacted on the work of NFMHS in-reach team who are continuing to provide their services remotely and are conducting patient assessment where necessary. In addition, the NFMHS have agreed to introduce a new model of short term care which will allow for the short-term transfer of a prisoner to the CMH for treatment and stabilisation before being returned to the prison.