



Probation Roadmap to Recovery

WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR:

In response to the threat of COVID-19, Probation had to respond swiftly to overcome the extraordinary challenges faced as a service and significantly adapt our ways of working. This has included:

- Running skeleton probation offices
- Ensuring Approved Premises (APs) continue to operate safely
- Implementing a number of national Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs) and Exceptional Delivery Plans (EDPs) to alter the way we manage community sentences and other areas of our work
- Conducting doorstep visits across England and Wales with high-risk offenders and medium-risk offenders with domestic abuse or other safeguarding issues
- A large number of probation staff working from home and contacting offenders by telephone
- Redeploying a number of qualified probation staff to support frontline services
- Significant changes for staff who were working in prisons and courts
- Developing alternative methods to deliver staff training and for our trainee Probation Officers

The restrictions we have put in place have been necessary to maximise staff and service user safety whilst continuing to deliver critical front-line services, protect the public and change lives. Our staff have done an outstanding job during this difficult period.

MOVING FORWARD:

In response to the UK Government's publication of "Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy", it is appropriate that the Probation Business Recovery Programme now considers how, as a service, we move forward from our initial response to this outbreak onto our recovery.

We will plan carefully for what the easing of restrictions will mean in practice, and such moves will be tailored to local circumstances, including any differences in approach between Wales and England given the devolution of many key areas including health and education in Wales. We will also continue to work closely with our criminal justice partners to align our recovery plans. Where certain activities can resume, such as office visits, they will do so with restrictions and adaptations (including reduced volume) in the interests of safety.

Progress in delivering more services will be measured and incremental and may need to be reversed, and restrictions re-imposed, in the event of a future concerning rise in the infection rate. We will ensure we are ready as a system to do this at pace if needed, in line with any wider Government action, and working in close alignment with our prison counterparts.

As we move on from the initial response phase to this outbreak, we are presented with opportunities of learning and innovation across the whole of HMPPS for potentially new ways of working, and to build a more resilient service which is better prepared for any future emergencies. For example, we have commissioned work to look at the learning we can take from staff and service user experiences of more remote offender management during the lockdown period, particularly focusing on the experiences of people with protected characteristics.

This document sets out our key principles of probation recovery and provides a summary of how we plan to continue to deliver services whilst COVID-19 remains a factor but Government guidance on lockdown is gradually relaxed.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE:

Our aspiration is still to deliver the MoJ [Single Departmental Plan](#) via the [HMPPS Business Strategy](#), but we know that delivery of services will be very challenging while we still face the threat of Covid-19. Our decisions will be guided at every stage by the following objectives:

Protect health: To continue to protect our staff, the public, and service users by minimising deaths and hospitalisations, and protecting the NHS from significant outbreaks.

Maintain public protection and rehabilitation: To ensure we continue to deliver our core functions, particularly focusing resources on our highest risk service users.

Provide sufficient capacity: Ensuring that we have enough resources to respond to court orders and sufficient capacity to meet overall demand, as well as sufficient staffing and resource to meet potential backlogs. (See staffing section below.)

THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR PROBATION ROADMAP

In order to maximise staff and service user safety and ensure that changes are well planned and understood before they are implemented:

1. We will take a cautious approach to changes that relax our contingency measures in probation work, ensuring this is only done when we are confident it is safe to do so.
2. Unless in exceptional circumstances, we will give staff at least two weeks' notice before any significant relaxation of current measures comes into effect, so there is time to prepare.
3. We will ensure we are working to deliver the best possible probation services we can in the specific operating circumstances we are working in, embracing innovation, rather than always returning to previous ways of working.
4. We will ensure that probation recovery is planned in a coordinated way with the plans for prison recovery, with other parts of the Criminal Justice System and with our delivery partners.

[The Government's overall "phased" approach](#) to recovery, published on 11 May, is summarised in Annex A. The rest of this document sets out how this phased approach will apply to probation. **The probation steps outlined below will start no sooner than the government's wider steps, and typically a few weeks later to allow for suitable planning and notice for staff.**

FOUNDATIONS

The key foundations of our plan are:

1. Ensuring symptomatic staff and service users self-isolate, at the earliest sign of symptoms, in line with wider government advice.
2. Social distancing, respiratory hygiene and hand-washing: wherever possible, the same robust social distancing, respiratory hygiene (catch it, bin it, kill it) and hand-washing principles must be maintained. As we and our providers adapt our exceptional delivery arrangements we will ensure that processes are maintained to manage this.
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): sufficient PPE must be available for staff and service users where it is necessary to provide PPE according to Public Health England / Wales guidance. Easing restrictions may in some cases increase the amount of PPE required, for example for increased staff in offices, so PPE stocks must be assessed as suitable before any changes takes place (staff should refer to national PPE guidance on what should be used).
4. Testing: Probation staff and service users are already able to access testing as needed if they display any COVID-19 symptoms, and this will link them into the NHS Test and Trace system if they test positive. We will continue to work with DHSC and Welsh Government, to ensure that appropriate testing is made available to probation staff and service users.

We will also continue to ensure that Diversity and Inclusion underpin our work and in doing so, ensure that the needs of all our staff and service users are considered throughout. As part of this process we will complete any equality analysis that is required; actively reflecting on and building in equality considerations at each stage of the development and delivery of our recovery plans.

PROBATION ROADMAP RECOVERY PHASES

Current position – Step One

We will continue to operate according to the Exceptional Delivery Models and Plans currently in place, with no major changes of our approach planned at least for the next 2 weeks. This includes:

- Staff continuing to work from home wherever possible, in recognition of the importance of staff and service user safety.
- Where staff do need to work from a location which is not their home under the current exceptional delivery arrangements, managers and staff need to ensure that the working environment is a safe one, in line with the government guidance, detailed in Annex B – ‘Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres’.

Risk assessments for each location should be maintained to ensure social distancing measures and good hand and respiratory hygiene can be maintained, safe working practice is possible and appropriate equipment is in place to manage COVID related risk.

The government guidance on office working (annex B) should be followed, summarised below:

- Ensuring anyone with symptoms leaves the workplace immediately and they and their family self-isolate at home
- Effective and regular hand washing
- Reducing the footfall in each location (in line with our exceptional delivery arrangements)
- Reduce the number of people a person has contact with each day (in line with our exceptional delivery arrangements)
- Maintaining a 2m distance from one another
- The suspension of hot-desk and the sharing of desks and equipment
- The avoidance of sitting face to face especially at close distance
- Where social distancing at 2m is not possible, staff and service users should wear fluid resistant masks (which we will provide). But we are clear that the best protection for all our staff is effective and regular hand hygiene and to maintain social distancing wherever possible.

Step Two

We will follow a staged approach to a less “locked down” approach to our work, continuing to prioritise public safety, but gradually increasing what we can do as social distancing constraints change over time. As set out in our principles above, any relaxation of social distancing within probation will come into effect with at least two weeks’ notice (other than in exceptional circumstances), so will happen at least two weeks after the Government’s wider move to “step two”.

Some of the earlier changes are likely to include:

- *Scaling back doorstep supervision and scaling up face to face supervision.* In order to ensure that social distancing is maintained at Probation Offices it will not be possible to return immediately to face to face supervision for all offenders. The following principles will be used at Local Delivery Unit (LDU) level to develop bespoke recovery plans for face to face supervision:
 - Each LDU will need to undertake a capacity analysis that identifies how many offenders are able to report each week in a way that supports continued social distancing. Managers should consider extending office opening times (this will need to include the availability of sufficient staff) and utilising any available estate and partnership buildings (following local agreements and thorough risk assessments).
 - Offenders currently receiving doorstep visits are also supervised by audio/ video telephone calls in between doorstep contact. During the initial phase of recovery, the audio/ video calling will continue, with only the doorstep visits being replaced by face to face supervision at a Probation Office. Even with this constraint it is still likely that available capacity will not be able to meet the demand and offenders will therefore need to be prioritised for a return to face to face supervision using the following criteria:
 - Category 1 - Very high and high risk of serious harm offenders where there are domestic abuse and/ or child safeguarding concerns*
 - Category 2 - Other very high and high risk of serious harm offenders*
 - Category 3 - Medium risk of serious harm offenders where there are domestic abuse and/ or child safeguarding concerns*
- If an LDU is able to accommodate all three categories of offenders and there remains additional capacity, then the prioritisation exercise should be repeated with face to face supervision being offered as a replacement for audio/ video calls.
- Home visits (where a member of staff enters the home of an offender and conducts supervision) will not be possible during this period. As a result, doorstep supervision will remain an important alternative method of risk management for some offenders, particularly those living with their victim or living with children at risk. Doorstep supervision can therefore continue to be utilised in tandem with face to face supervision as part of a risk management plan.
 - All changes to supervision and risk management activity will need to be accompanied by a corresponding review of the risk management plan and sentence plan. It is recognised that this will place a significant burden on front-line staff. This activity will be properly benchmarked and resourcing options considered.

We will ensure that the groups are small in numbers to move slowly and safely away from doorstep supervision and we will conduct a review after one week for each group before we move to the next.

As we would move to increase face to face supervision, in line with the risk assessments we will complete (details can be found in Annex B), we would further consider:

- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, we will take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission. We will:
 - Assess whether protective screens should be fitted in interview rooms and reception areas where required
 - Consider further changes to office opening hours
 - Give staff the option to work alternative hours to minimise footprint in offices
 - Consider implementing a staff rota for attending the office such as, a one week on one week off system which alternates
 - Explore changes to our office set up, changing desk layouts and creating a one-way route with one entrance and one exit mapped out
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible – we will ensure staff are only based in the workplace for as long as needed to carry out critical operational delivery.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face to face) whenever possible and explore changes to our office set up, changing desk layouts and creating a one-way route with one entrance and one exit mapped out.
- In our risk assessments we will have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 (or live with those who are). All staff are urged to inform line managers of any special circumstances which may mean they or people they live with are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus, we will conduct individual risk assessments before returns to work and take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of our staff.

For anyone considered vulnerable or at a higher risk of impact from COVID-19, an individual risk assessment should be completed before returning to an office location.

- When travelling everybody (including critical workers) should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible. If they can, people should instead choose to cycle, walk or drive (but not sharing a vehicle with those outside their household). If staff do need to take public transport, the Government is now advising that you should aim to wear a homemade cloth face-covering for your journey.

In line with the guidance, we will display the Government approved notice in all work environments to show we have followed this guidance, confirming that:

- We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and shared the results with the people who work here and trade unions
- We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance
- We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home

- We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace
- Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to manage transmission risk

This can be found via:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb97d30d3bf7f5d364bfbb6/staying-covid-19-secure.pdf>

To support gradual increases in face to face supervision, we also plan to *increase flexibility of operating hours for buildings used for face to face contact*. This is to allow for greater numbers to be seen over a day without increasing the total number of people on site at any one time, and to reduce the risks involved in rush hour travel. It may also have the knock-on benefit of being desirable for staff with caring responsibilities.

To be clear, the earlier changes as part of this stage will not include opening more offices wherever possible, we are strongly focused on ensuring the small number of sites we have open are fully safe by completion of full risk assessments detailing that we are adhering Government guidelines (as set out in Annex B). We will explore opening these smaller number of offices for longer hours to minimise staff footfall. We are committed to staff continuing to work from home wherever possible, even if that is only part of the week.

Other earlier changes as part of step to are likely to include:

- *Scaling up court work as needed by increased court activity*. The following areas of work will be taken forward across England and Wales:
 - The NPS will continue to work closely with HMCTS and staff open Courts as required.
 - The NPS will fully engage with the roll-out of Technology Enabled Justice in order to maximise the potential of remote digital working.
 - The NPS will feed into the recovery planning work being undertaken by HMCTS. There is a significant backlog of criminal cases across England and Wales which will result in an increased demand for sentencing advice, bail information and the management of community sentences. The HMCTS recovery plan will be used to effectively distribute our resources to meet business need.
- *Restarting unpaid work and interventions, initially on a limited scale*. This is central to maintaining the confidence of sentencers as well as meeting our broader aims of public protection and reducing reoffending. The following areas of work will be taken forward:
 - Working with our providers to explore possibilities for commencing unpaid work e.g. singleton placements compatible with social distancing measures.
 - Working with providers and Intervention Services on options for the delivery of accredited programmes in innovative, socially distance ways.
 - Identifying and sharing innovations in the area of supervision and rehabilitation that have been effectively delivered during the COVID-19 period. It is recognised that there will have been significant development in these areas over recent weeks and that such work has the potential to make probation practice more effective and efficient.

- *Restarting Programmes* – we will consider how we can safely reintroduce delivery of programmes within the NPS, in line with the Government guidance (Annex B), if people must work face to face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then employers need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one will be obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

This will form the basis of our consideration on when we can safely re-introduce programme delivery and group work. We are currently exploring the ability to run programme work on a one-to-one basis or remotely to minimise risk to staff and service users.

- *Restarting Offender Management in Custody (OMiC)*. In liaison with colleagues in prisons, we will look to re-deploy OMiC staff back into prisons when appropriate and in line with Prison regime changes.

Step Three

The next step will take place when the Government assessment of risk from COVID-19 warrants further adjustments to the remaining measures. The ambition would be (working in line with the Government COVID-19 Secure guidelines) to:

- open remaining offices in a coordinated way and in line with the guidance set out in Annex B
- restart Unpaid Work and Interventions on a larger scale
- restart face to face training and associated activities
- Commence re-opening of Approved Premises (AP) which have been closed due to *non* COVID-19 reasons
- We will start to plan to re-open AP closed due to COVID-19
- We propose to maintain single occupancy within AP until Government, Health and other guidance along with data suggests that we can safely move back to double occupancy

STAFFING

Through our established daily reporting mechanisms, we will continue to monitor our staffing levels closely to ensure we are able to respond effectively and safely deliver services.

We will take the following approach, in order of this hierarchy of resourcing options, to move out of the current Exceptional Delivery Models and introduce new service delivery elements.

1. Existing staff establishments
2. Staff overtime
3. Agency staff
4. Redeployment of other HMP/PPS staff
5. Former staff identified as part of the 'returners work'
6. Other Government Department offers/arrangements
7. Third Sector arrangements

We will ensure that there is clarity on incremental increases to service delivery, as well as consistency in delivery and decisions on how we will staff the changes, through utilising this hierarchy of options on how we will cover staff availability and/or increases throughout.

As mentioned above, unless in exceptional circumstances, we will give staff at least two weeks' notice before any significant relaxation of current measures comes into effect, so there is time to prepare and for transparency.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Ministers will make a judgement on the acceptable level of risk for the system as a whole, on the advice of HMPPS and Public Health England and Wales. In practice, this will involve Ministers making a “gateway” decision, at a national level, on the principle of us moving from probation step one to step two, and step two to step three.

If the position on COVID-19 deteriorates (eg the R number significantly increases) and we need to move back from a higher to a lower step, these decisions will be made for regions or local areas which are affected. Regions will make a request to the Probation Business Recovery Programme to move back a step, or indeed not move forward a step when the rest of the country does. We will send an update report to Ministers fortnightly, and inform them if any part of the country moves from a higher to a lower step.

The Recovery Programme Board will oversee recovery coordination for the wider probation business, to ensure that decisions made in one part of the business do not adversely affect other parts, or the wider system. This will include setting the pace for operational recovery (agreeing high level milestones/ targets within the workstreams), driving progress and alignment, and monitoring wider impacts and dependencies (in line with MOJ/ HMPPS plans). It will also involve liaising and communicating closely with regions (through regional Recovery and Transition Boards – to ensure all changes are coordinated at local level) and staff.

Recovery Workstreams that will report to the Recovery Programme Board include:

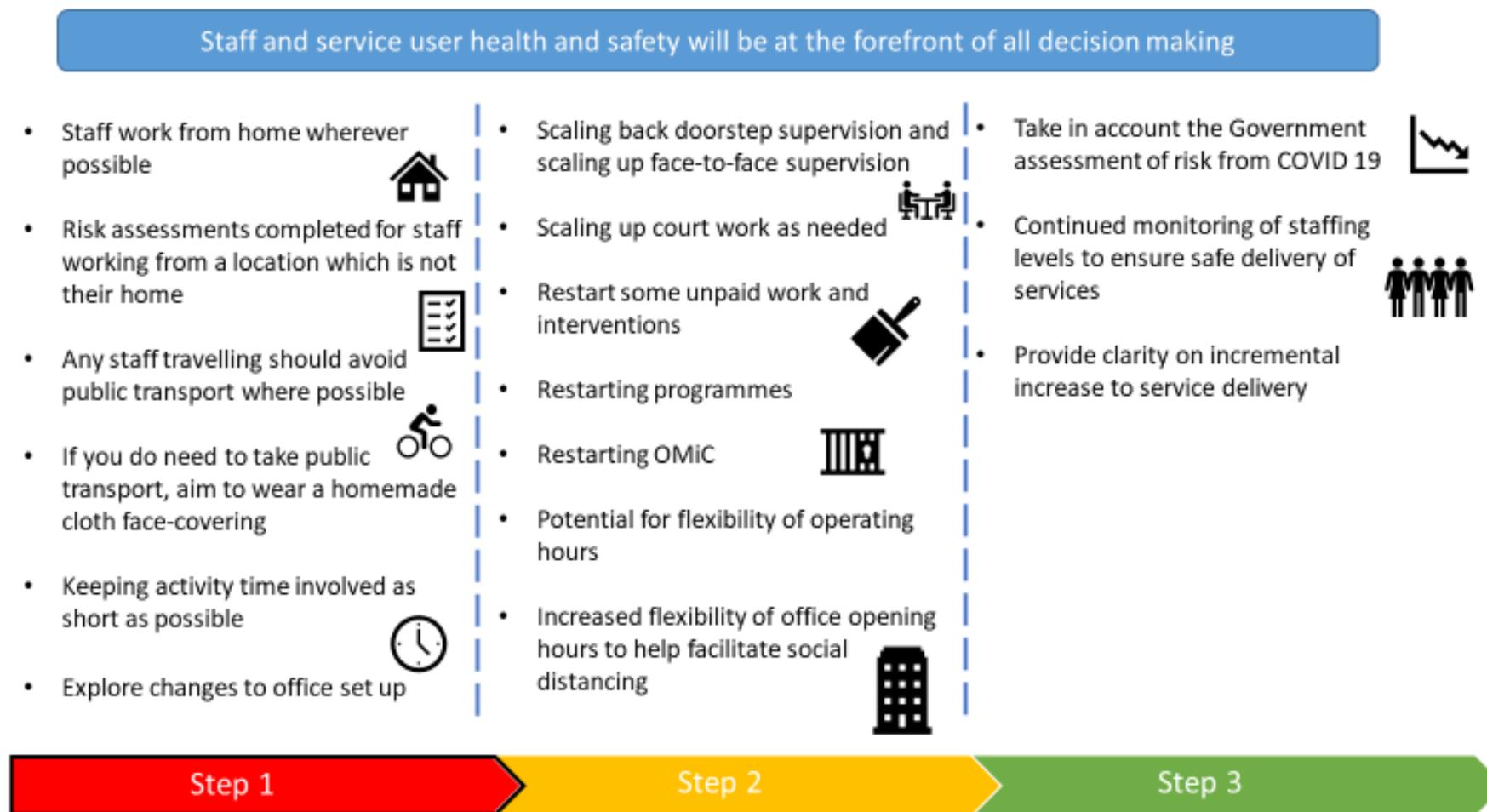
- Community and post-release supervision
- Courts
- Victims
- Accredited Programmes
- Unpaid work and ETE
- Approved Premises and Bail Accommodation and Support Services
- Offender Management in Custody
- Public Protection
- Health
- HQ Functions
- Enabling infrastructure (including digital, estates, IT, supply chains, PPE)
- Assurance (including input from Her Majesties Inspectorate of Probation)
- Trade unions
- Communications and engagement
- Contingency planning

More specific guidance will be made available as recovery work progresses. This will set out what the overriding position, and where it is appropriate to adapt the approach to local circumstances.

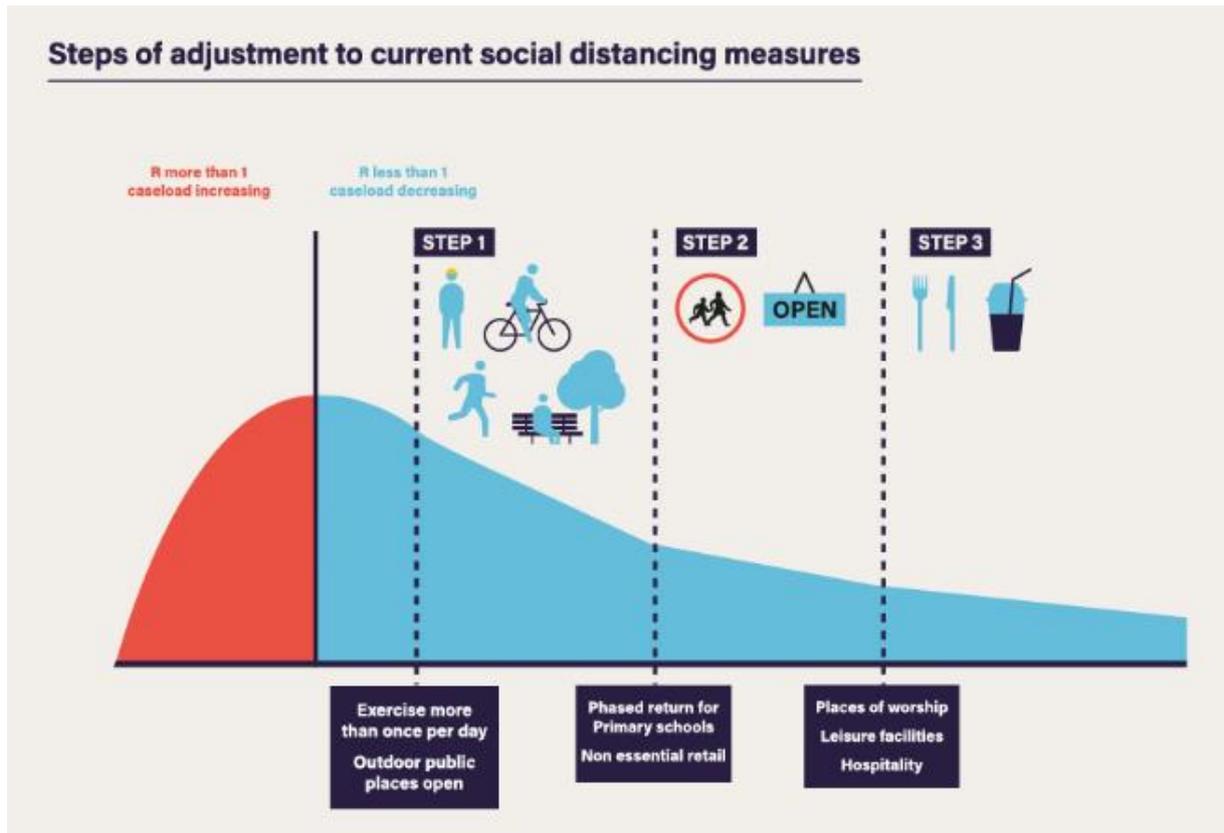
Oversight and reporting will be conducted via national, regional and workstream level assurance processes.

Central assurance processes will provide regular updates to Ministers on progress against key success indicators.

Diagram 1 - Summary of Probation Step 1, Step 2 and Step 3



ANNEX A Summary of elements of the government's 10th May announcement



Step 1 (from 13th May)

- Those who can work from home should continue to do so.
- All staff who cannot work from home should travel to work.
- When travelling everybody (including critical workers) should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible. If they can, people should instead choose to cycle, walk or drive.
- If you do need to take public transport, the Government is now advising that you should aim to wear a homemade cloth face-covering.
- Workplaces should follow the “COVID-19 Secure” guidelines, published 11th May, to maximize social distancing at work.

Step 2 (no earlier than 1 June)

The current planning assumption for England is that the second step may include a phased return for early years settings and schools, opening non-essential retail when and where it is safe to do so, permitting cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed-doors for broadcast, re-opening more local public transport in urban areas, subject to strict measures and some increases to social and family contact allowed.

Step 3 (no earlier than 4 July)

The ambition at this step is to open at least some of the remaining businesses and premises that have been required to close, including personal care (such as hairdressers and beauty salons) hospitality (such as pubs and accommodation), public places (such as places of worship) and leisure facilities (like cinemas).

Annex B - Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres

As per the UK Government's guidance "[Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres](#)" published on 11th May, employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Therefore, before opening any further sites, in line with Government guidance, we will work through these steps in order:

- Making every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).
- Increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning in every workplace.
- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

Further mitigating actions include:

- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face to face) whenever possible.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
- Finally, if people must work face to face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.
- In our assessments we will have particular regard to whether the people doing the work (or those they live with) are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.