

# COVID-19 in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs)



Independent information about COVID-19, the risks, what should be happening in IRCs and what it could mean for your case.



**Detention Action**

The Green House, 244-254 Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9DA  
[www.detentionaction.org.uk](http://www.detentionaction.org.uk) Registered Charity Number 1065066

# Information about COVID-19

## What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus infects the lungs. Symptoms start with a fever followed by a dry cough, which can lead to breathing problems.

This is a new, continuous cough and means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or having three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual). It takes five days on average to start showing the symptoms, scientists have said, but some people will get symptoms much later than this.

## Protecting yourself and preventing spread

Coronavirus spreads when an infected person coughs small droplets - packed with the virus - into the air. These can be breathed in, or cause an infection if you touch a surface they have landed on, then your eyes, nose or mouth.

The best thing you can do is regular and thorough hand washing, preferably with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. In addition, coughing and sneezing into tissues, not touching your face with unwashed hands, and avoiding close contact with infected

people, are important for limiting the spread.

The Government has put into place "social distancing" measures requiring that people stay a minimum of two metres apart. The Home Office has advised detention centres that practices should be reviewed to ensure adequate social distancing.

## Vulnerable groups

If you have one of the following medical conditions, you might be more vulnerable to COVID-19:

- Diseases affecting breathing/lungs, like asthma
- Severe heart disease, such as heart failure
- Severe kidney disease
- Severe liver disease, such as hepatitis
- Severe neurological illnesses, like multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Diabetes
- Sickle cell disease, or problems with your spleen
- A weakened immune system because of conditions like HIV/ AIDS, or medicines like steroids
- You are also more vulnerable if you're over 70
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Source: NHS / [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

# What the Home Office has told us will happen in detention centres:

1. There will be posters in common areas about washing your hands and keeping clean. Cleaning materials and toiletries such as soap are available on request in all IRCs.
2. Staff will be cleaning surfaces that are touched regularly.
3. There will be social distancing in communal areas like the library, and you should be able to eat meals in your rooms.
4. If you feel unwell, you have a right to request to be put in isolation for your own safety and that of others.
5. You should not expect to be transferred, but if you're told you are being transferred you can call us or your solicitor if you have one.

If you feel something isn't right, you can talk to centre management, Healthcare or your local support organisation.

## COVID-19 and your case

### Case reviews

The Home Office has committed to reviewing everyone's detention in light of COVID-19. It is unlikely that you will be told when this has happened, but you may wish to seek advice from a solicitor.

### Removals

Many removals to the following countries have been stopped. If you could face removal to one of these countries, you may benefit from speaking with a solicitor. If not, you can still seek legal advice.

Afghanistan	public	Ireland	Luxemburg	Slovakia
Albania	Denmark	Italy	Mauritania	Slovenia
Algeria	Egypt	Jamaica	Morocco	Somalia
Austria	Finland	Jordan	Netherlands	Spain
Bulgaria	France	Kenya	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Cameroon	German	Kuwait	Poland	Sudan
China	Greece	Latvia	Portugal	Turkey
Croatia	Hungary	Lebanon	Romania	Uganda
Cyprus	India	Libya	Rwanda	Ukraine
Czech Re-	Iraq	Lichtenstein	Saudi Arabia	Zimbabwe

NOTE: This list was accurate at 23rd March and is being updated each day. New countries could be added at any time.

## Contacting a solicitor

You may want to speak to a solicitor about your situation. There are two types of solicitors you can speak to:

An **Immigration Solicitor** is someone who helps with your immigration case, for example helping to challenge your deportation. A **Public Law Solicitor** can challenge decisions or actions made by the government, when they might be unlawful, for example the Home Office's decision to detain you.

You can have a Public Law Solicitor and an immigration solicitor because they do different things. **Both** can be covered by Legal Aid.

We work closely with following public law solicitors:

### **DPG Solicitors:**

07308951559 / 02074070007  
mail@dpglaw.co.uk

### **Bindmans Solicitors**

Rachel Harger on 020 7833 4433

### **Leigh Day**

020 7650 1200

### **Wilson Solicitors LLP**

0208 808 7535

### **Bhatt Murphy**

020 7729 1115

For support and help with contacting solicitors, get in touch with your local support organisation:

**Medical Justice** (Independent doctors that visit people in all IRCs)

Tel: 0207 561 7498

Fax: 08450 529 370

### **Bail for Immigration**

**Detainees (BID)** (For free advice and information on how to apply for bail for all IRCs. 10am-12pm, Monday to Thursday)

Tel: 020 7456 9750

Fax: 0203 745 5226

### **SOAS Visitors Group /SDS:**

(student volunteers visiting people in IRCs)

Tel: 0743 8407 570

Email: s.det.sup@gmail.com

### **Scottish Detainee Visitors**

(Dungavel IRC only)

Tel: 0141 248 9799

Fax: 0141 243 2499

### **Morton Hall Visitors Group**

(Morton Hall IRC only)

Tel: 07758 604 293

Email: volunteer@mhdetentionvisitors.org

### **Gatwick Detainees Welfare**

**Group** (Tinsley House IRC & Brook House IRCs only)

Freephone: 0800 389 4367

Fax: 01293 474 001

**Yarl's Wood Befrienders** (Yarl's Wood IRC only)

Tel: 01234 272 090

Email: info@ywbefrienders.org

### **Women for Refugee Women**

(Support for women in detention)

Call Gemma on 07858 042 452