



Home Office

Detention Services Order 01/2020

Detained Individuals' Access to Video Call Services

August 2024



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Document Details

Process: To set out the provision for video calls within the immigration removal estate, excluding non-residential short-term holding facilities.

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Review Date: August 2026

Version: 1.1

Contains Mandatory Instructions

For Action: All Home Office staff and suppliers operating in immigration removal centres (IRC), Gatwick pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHF), Detainee Escorting Population Management Unit (DEPMU) staff and escort supplier staff.

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Processes Affected: This DSO sets out instructions to ensure that detained individuals have reasonable access to a video call service whilst detained.

Assumptions: All staff will have the necessary knowledge to follow these instructions.

Notes: This DSO does not apply to non-residential short-term holding facilities.

Instruction

Introduction

1. This Detention Services Order (DSO) provides instructions for all staff in IRCs, Gatwick PDA, Residential Short-Term Holding Facilities (RSTHFs), as well as escorting staff and DEPMU. This excludes detained individuals accommodated in holding rooms (non-residential short-term facilities).
2. Two different Home Office teams operate in IRCs:
 - Detention Services (DS) Compliance team (Compliance team)
 - Detention Engagement team (DET)

The **Compliance team** are responsible for all on-site commercial and contract monitoring work. The **DETs** interact with detained individuals face-to-face on behalf of responsible officers within the IRCs. They focus on communicating and engaging with people detained at IRCs, serving paperwork on behalf of caseworkers and helping them to understand their cases and detention.

There are no DETs at RSTHFs, or the Gatwick PDA. Some of the functions which are the responsibility of the DET in IRCs, are instead carried out by the contracted service provider and overseen by the International and Returns Services (IRS) Escorting Contract Monitoring Team (ECMT) in RSTHFs. In the Gatwick PDA, the role of detained individual engagement is covered by the local Compliance Team.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this DSO is to ensure that detained individuals have reasonable and regulated access to a video call service whilst ensuring that the security of the immigration removal estate is not undermined.
4. For the purpose of this guidance, “centre” refers to IRCs, RSTHFs and the Gatwick PDA.

Procedures

5. Video call services, that are accessible from a browser to facilitate video conversations, have been introduced in IRCs and RSTHFs to improve links between detained individuals and their friends and families.
6. Staff activity with regard to monitoring the use of the video call service should comply with the standards set out in DSO 2/2015: [Regulation of Investigatory](#)

[Powers Act 2000 \(RIPA\)](#), which states that staff in centres can undertake general observations, or surveillance, as part of their daily duties.

Provision of Video Call Service

7. Each centre must ensure that a video call service is available for use over a minimum period of seven hours every day.
8. Regulated access to the video calls service will be provided to detained individuals, subject to the detained individual signing up to the individual centre's compact outlining the acceptable use policy for video calls. Where it is determined that the detained individual has an insufficient knowledge of English to understand the acceptable use policy, the policy should be read to the detained individual and explained in a language that they understand. Only once the compact has been signed and understood should individuals be granted access to video calls.
9. The video call service will only be made available to detained individuals following an individual risk assessment. The risk assessment must include: Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) restraining orders, e.g. licence conditions, level one, no contact with children restrictions or any other harassment control measures based on individual risk assessments being carried out. Risk assessments should be reviewed on an on-going basis and each time a new recipient for a call is requested, dependent on factors such as potential new information from other establishments, or wider agencies or a change in risk factors. Where there is evidence that a detained individual has not complied with the individual centre's compact outlining acceptable use policy for video calls, the Centre Manager may decide to restrict access to the service or in some cases withdraw access altogether in line with the procedures set out in paragraph 17 of this DSO.
10. Detained individuals should be made aware at the point of induction to request the video call 24 hours in advance, providing the name of the recipient receiving the call. If a detained individual requests an urgent call, the DCO should consider such a request, in line with the procedures set out in paragraph 11. Any refusals should be recorded on an incident report – with the reason for refusal - and submitted to the centre security team for review.
11. Detainee Custody Officers (DCOs) will be responsible for facilitating and supervising the calls at the scheduled times. It is accepted that individuals being called may have children present with them, but prior to the call commencing a DCO will carry out a check, by requesting photographic ID to confirm that the main recipient of the call is as named on the application and is an adult over the age of 18.
12. Video call services will also be made available to detained individuals for the purpose of contacting their legal advisers. Wherever possible these calls will be

given priority and every visit will take place in sight of, but out of the hearing of, the DCOs. In line with [DSO 04/2012 Visitors and Visiting Procedures](#), on booking a legal appointment a section 84 form must be completed which is used to confirm the detained individuals advisor/solicitors contact details and qualifications.

13. Whilst third party recording of the call is prohibited, DCOs should be reminded that it cannot always be prevented, and they should always maintain the highest level of professionalism. Any evidence of a video call being recorded by a third party will result in termination of the call. All incidents of video calls being terminated by supplier staff will be referred to the centre's security department for investigation in line with [DSO 11/2014 Security Information Reports](#).
14. Video callers and detained individuals will be expected to dress appropriately, and supervising staff have the right to terminate the video call where the terms of use are breached, or the security of the centre is put at risk. Supervising staff may use body worn cameras to record any breach of the terms of use, either by the detained individual or the video caller.
15. The video call service will be delivered through a terminal fixed in a static position or a tablet that is appropriately secured in a readily accessible area of the centre for detained individuals. Direct observation of the calls should be kept to a minimum to assure detained individuals that as much privacy is afforded as possible. In areas where the peripheral view of the camera is a concern, privacy frosting film or similar should be considered to restrict that view.
16. Staff should consider any adjustments needed to the service provision as a result of a resident's protected characteristics, e.g., provision of a sign language interpreter for the duration of the video call.

Monitoring and Audit

17. The contracted service providers at each centre must ensure that the video calling infrastructure is robust and secure and that effective security measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access to the video call service. The centre's local Security Strategy Document should include a reference to the video calls provision. This document will be reviewed annually by both the Home Office compliance team and Centre Manager.
18. A decision to suspend access to the video call service can be taken by the Contracted Service provider Deputy Centre Manager (the person appointed under section 148(1) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 with the responsibility of the overall management of the centre). They may do so for security or safety reasons or because a detained individual is in breach of the centre's acceptable use policy on the use of the video call service. A decision to suspend access to the video call service must be recorded and the detained individual notified in writing of the suspension and the reason for it. A decision to suspend should not be used as a sanction for wider non-compliance by a detained individual.

19. The Home Office Compliance Manager must be notified of any suspension and the reasons for it. Any suspension exceeding a period of 1 week must be authorised by the Compliance Manager and reviewed on a weekly basis until the risk of breach of the policy has been removed and the suspension has ended.
20. The detained individual can appeal any suspension, providing reasons in writing to the Contracted Service Provider, who will make a decision within 48 hours. For detained individuals with imminent removal directions, the decision should be made within 12 hours. Alternative methods of access to legal services must be provided to those detained individuals who are suspended from video calling. The review is to be completed by a service provider Centre Manager not involved in the original decision-making process. Where the detained individual is unsatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they may wish to raise a formal complaint, which must be conducted under the complaints process outlined in [DSO 03/2015 Handling Complaints](#).
21. The DCO is responsible for setting up and supervising the video call. If the DCO has any concerns about the nature of the video call or safety of the recipient, they have the right to terminate the video call. The DCO must record their concerns and/or observations in an incident report and submit this to the centre's security team for review.
22. If the DCO identifies any concerns during the video call, such as distress of the detained individual for example, a welfare check must also be conducted with the detained individual and appropriate assistance provided.

Audit

23. An annual self-audit of this DSO is required by contracted service providers to ensure that the processes are being followed. This audit should be made available to the Home Office on request.
24. DS Compliance teams must also conduct an annual audit against their respective responsibilities stated within this DSO for the same purpose.

Annex A

Video Calls: Compact

Before access to video calls can be granted you must understand and sign, confirming your agreement to the rules set out below:

No video or audio recordings are taken from the video call. We will only your log name, the date, the time, the recipient's name and the duration of your call. All personal data will be permanently deleted 6 months after their last call to a resident, in line with procedures for handling and retention of data that is documented in [DSO 04/2012 Visitors and visiting procedures](#).

Privacy will be respected so far as practicable during your call, but video call sessions may be visually supervised by staff.

Sessions will be available in 30-minute slots.

Video callers and detained individuals will be expected to be dressed appropriately – not in swim wear or underwear for example.

Supervising staff have the right to terminate the video call where the terms of use are breached, or the security of the centre, or the detained individual is put at risk.

Supervising staff may use body worn cameras to record any breach of the terms of use, either by the detained individual or the video caller.

Any evidence of a criminal offence having occurred or being planned will be referred to the police.

Video calls must not be recorded in any way (audio or visual) or published (which includes uploading to a website such as YouTube). Evidence of recording will result in the call being terminated and the evidence maybe passed to the police.

A video call will be terminated as a result of foul or abusive language, sexualised behaviour, or any behaviour that is deemed inappropriate by supervising staff.

A breach of the terms of use may result in a ban or suspension from booking future video call sessions.

Detained Individual Code of Conduct

You must:

- Be conscious of and respect other users.

- Report any concerns from the call to a member of staff, including any instances where you find speaking with family upsetting or learn distressing or disturbing news to a DCO so you can be given assistance and discuss these issues with the welfare team (as appropriate).
- Co-operate with the supervisor at all times and comply with any instructions given.
- Report any breach of this policy by yourself or others to the contracted service provider without delay.

You must not:

- Use the video call service to engage in any unlawful activity.
- Configure or change any settings on the equipment.
- Share your screen or display any material which is unlawful or is likely to cause offence to others, including pornographic, racist, or homophobic material.
- Record the call. Any evidence of a video call being recorded by a third party will result in termination of the call.

AGREEMENT

I have read and understand the contents, or I understand the contents explained to me of this policy concerning the use of video calls and agree to abide by its terms and conditions.

I understand that any breach of this policy may result in me being suspended from using the video call service. I also understand that any attempt to engage in any unlawful activity will be reported to the police and may result in criminal prosecution.

Name

Signature

Date

Revision History

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
August 2024	Karl Ward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardised Changes applied throughout document.• Self-audit lines added.	August 2026