



Home Office

Detention Services Order 15/2012

Fingerprinting of detained individuals

May 2026



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Document details

Process: This DSO outlines the- mandatory instructions and procedures to be followed by all Home Office and Contracted Service Provider (CSP) staff for fingerprinting detained individuals.

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Contains Mandatory Instructions

For Action: Home Office and **CSP** staff operating in immigration removal centres (IRCs) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHFs).

For Information: Home Office Caseworkers

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Processes Affected: All processes relating to the fingerprinting of detained individuals.

Assumptions: All CSP staff have the necessary knowledge to take fingerprints and have received the relevant training.

Notes: N/A

Instruction

Introduction

1. This Detention Services Order (DSO) provides mandatory instructions for all Home Office and CSP staff working in immigration removal centres (IRCs) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHFs) on fingerprinting detained individuals.
2. This DSO does not apply to those detained in a non - residential STHF, pre-departure accommodation (PDA) or Residential Holding Rooms (RHRs).
3. CSP staff working in RSTHFs are not expected to take fingerprints from detained individuals. In the event that fingerprints are required to be taken for someone detained in an RSTHF, Home Office Immigration Enforcement Officials (HOIE) should contact the facility directly and make arrangements to attend the RSTHF in order for fingerprints to be taken.
4. For the purposes of this DSO 'Centre manager(s)' refers to the contracted service provider (CSP) (i.e. it does not refer to on-site Home Office staff).
5. Two different **Home Office teams** operate in IRCs:
 - Detention Services Compliance teams (Compliance teams)
 - Immigration Enforcement Detention Engagement teams (DETs)

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, helping them to understand their cases and detention.

There are no DETs at Residential Short-term Holding Facilities (RSTHFs) and the Gatwick PDA; functions which are the responsibility of the DETs in RSTHFs are carried out by the contracted service provider and overseen by the International and Returns Services (IRS) Escorting Operations (Escorting Ops). In the Gatwick PDA, the role of engagement with detained individuals is covered by the local Compliance team.

Policy

6. Any detained person may have their fingerprints taken in accordance with section 141 of the [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) if specifically directed by the Secretary of State (i.e. a Home Office official acting on behalf of the Secretary of State or other authorised person within the definition in section 141(5) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999).

- Section 141(1) of the 1999 Act states that “Fingerprints may be taken by an authorised person from a person to whom this section applies”.
 - Section 141(5)(e) lists “a person who is employed by a contractor in connection with the discharge of the contractor’s duties under a removal centre contract” as an authorised person.
 - Section 141(5)(c) specifies “a prison officer” as an authorised person.
7. Under section 141(5) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, those authorised to take fingerprints are: a constable; an Immigration Officer; a prison officer; an officer of the Secretary of State authorised for the purpose; or a person who is employed by a contractor in connection with the discharge of the contractor’s duties under a removal centre contract.
 8. Section 141(7)(c) of the [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) gives authorisation to take fingerprints of any person in respect of whom the Secretary of State has decided to make a deportation order.
 9. All Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) aged 18 years and over are to be fingerprinted in accordance with section 141(7)(c) within 24 hours of arrival at the centre unless the detained individual’s Detainee Transferable Document (DTD) states they have already been fingerprinted in another centre, or in a Police Station by a Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) official
 10. If an individual’s fingerprints have been taken by the Police, but not an HOIE official, fingerprints will still need to be taken on arrival at the centre.
 11. Fingerprints must be taken in an IRC by the CSP when requested by the Home Office responsible caseworker team under the circumstances set out in [subsection 7 of section 141 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#)
 12. Should the Home Office responsible caseworker team request fingerprints in an RSTHF the procedures outlined in Paragraph 3 must be followed.

Procedures

13. The responsible caseworker team should email the appropriate IRC CSP to request fingerprints and must specify the reasons for fingerprinting and provide details of the email inbox that the results should be returned to.
14. When taking fingerprints the CSP staff should ensure they use clear language and that interpretation services are utilised where they are required in accordance with [DSO 02 2022-interpretation-services-and-use-of-translation-devices-accessible-](#)

[version](#). They must also provide support for people with mobility issues or people who may be distressed by the process.

15. Unless otherwise specified by the responsible caseworker team in the request form, all fingerprint requests should be completed within 72 hours by CSPs, any subsequent authority requests must be completed within 24 hours.
16. All IRCs are equipped with a Livescan unit to take fingerprints of detained individuals under section 141 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Livescan units run fingerprints taken through the Immigration and Asylum Biometric System (IABS) – UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI's) biometric database. Once fingerprints are taken through Livescan, the results, along with a picture of the individual being fingerprinted, must be emailed directly to the inbox used by the responsible caseworker team in the request form. An IS86 form must be issued by the Casework team to the detained individual each time their fingerprints are requested. This must include the reason why they are being fingerprinted and how long those fingerprints will be retained, in line with the [Immigration \(Collection, Use and Retention of Biometric Information and Related Amendments\) Regulations 2021](#). All biometric data must be handled in compliance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and any other associated data protection legislation.
17. All CSP staff who take fingerprints from detained individuals must undertake IABS training, delivered and recorded by the CSPs before being allowed to do so.
18. On the front page of the DTD, CSP staff must clearly state that fingerprints have been taken and record the date and time below their centre name. Detailed instructions for the DTD are located in the latest guidance available on [DSO 01/2019 Detainee escort records](#)
19. Fingerprints are classified as special category personal data under the UK GDPR due to their uniquely identifiable and sensitive nature. This means they must be handled with enhanced safeguards, including a clear lawful basis for processing, strict access controls, and secure storage within accredited systems. Any sharing or transfer must be encrypted and limited to authorised personnel. All individuals involved in handling fingerprint data including DCOs must ensure full compliance with Home Office data protection policies and relevant legal obligations as stated in [the UK's data protection legislation](#)

Dealing with refusals to provide fingerprints

20. Section 146(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 gives any person authorised to take fingerprints, as listed under section 141 of the same Act, the power to use reasonable force when necessary to fingerprint an individual. Depending on the circumstances, this might include someone refusing to provide their fingerprints. It is essential that any use of reasonable force is proportionate to the situation (i.e. the

minimum necessary to achieve the identified objective) in accordance with the Home Office guidance on use of force and reporting [DSO 11/2025 Use of force for adults in detention](#)

21. Detainee Custody Officers (DCOs) taking fingerprints by force must be trained in Control and Restraint (C&R) and must pass annual C&R refresher training.
22. If a detained individual refuses to have their fingerprints taken, all reasonable efforts must first be made to persuade them to comply. It follows from Rule 41 of [The Detention Centre Rules 2001](#) and Rule 36 of [The Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018](#) that the use of force must always be regarded as a matter of last resort to be used when other measures (e.g. verbal persuasion) not involving the use of force, have been unsuccessful. If all other measures have been exhausted and there is no record of the detained individual having already provided fingerprints (or the fingerprints on record are not of acceptable quality), the matter should be dealt with as a planned use of force.
23. The Centre Manager (or nominated person fulfilling the role of the centre manager in charge) must be satisfied that all efforts made to acquire fingerprints, without recourse to force, have been exhausted. The decision to take fingerprints by force must be documented and supported by a risk assessment to be conducted and signed by the Centre Manager (or nominated person fulfilling the role of the centre manager in charge), detailing the efforts leading to the decision to use force. As per [DSO 11/2025 Use of Force for Adults in Detention](#), all planned interventions should be recorded on a handheld video recorder by CSP staff trained in its usage.
24. All decisions to take fingerprints by force, and the use of force reports completed in relation to the incident, must be kept by the CSP. These records must be available to the local Compliance Team and all footage should be retained in accordance with [DSO 02/2017 'Surveillance Camera Systems'](#).
25. The CSP must complete a IS91RA Part C stating that use of force was used to take fingerprints and share with the DET and DEPMU. It is the DET's responsibility to forward the Part C to the case owner and DEPMU's responsibility to upload on to Atlas.
26. The IS91RA part C: Supplementary Information form is used for any subsequent notification in escalation or reduction in risk factors. The Compliance Team should escalate this delay to the Compliance Team Area Manager, for consideration of a planned use of force in agreement with the CSP.

Self-Audit

27. An annual self-audit of this DSO is required by CSPs to ensure that the processes are being followed. This audit should be made available to the Home Office on request.

Revision history

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
Feb 2015	F Hardy	Rebranded	Feb 2017
July 2016	E Jarvis	General update	July 2018
July 2023	T Amisu	General Update Update to reflect the change in terminology from detainee to detained individual Removal of Eurodac requirements following Britain leaving the European Union	July 2025
May 2025	K Ward	General update	May 2027