



HM Prison & Probation Service



Ministry of Justice

Policy name: Authorised Communications Controls Policy Framework

Reference: N/A

Re-issue Date: 11 August 2026

Implementation Date:

- **From 20 September 2022** - All sections, excluding section 23 (Enhanced Contact Vetting).
- **From June 2025** - Section 9.1 – 9.54.

Replaces the following documents (e.g. PSIs, PSOs, Custodial Service Specs, Policy Frameworks) which are hereby cancelled:

- PSI 04/2016 - The Interception of Communications in Prisons and Security Measures.

Introduces amendments to the following documents:

- Managing Extremism and Terrorism Amongst Offenders in Custody: Policy Framework.
- Managing Extremism and Terrorism Amongst Offenders in Custody: Detailed Guidance.
- PSI 43/2014 - Management and Security of Category A Prisoners.
- PSI 09/2015 - The Identification, Initial Categorisation and Management of Potential and Provisional Category A / Restricted Status Prisoners.
- PSI 49/2011 – Prisoner Communication Services.
- PSI 18/2016 – Public Protection Manual.
- Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate).
- Management of Security at Visits (Closed Estate).
- Secure Social Video Calling Interim Policy Framework.
- Use of Drug Trace Detection Equipment in prisons Policy Framework
- 2022 Separation Centres Operating Manual.

Action required by:

☒	HMPPS HQ	☒	Governors
☒	Public Sector Prisons	☒	Heads of Group
☒	Contracted Prisons	☒	The Probation Service
☒	Under 18 Young Offender Institutions	☒	Other providers of Probation and Community Services
☒	HMPPS Rehabilitation Contract Services Team		

Mandatory Actions: All groups referenced above must adhere to the Requirements section of this Policy Framework, which contains all mandatory actions.

For Information: The aim of this Policy Framework is to produce clearer and more enhanced risk-based guidance for prisons on managing and mitigating the risks associated with authorised communications, across all prisons in England and Wales.

By the implementation date governors of public sector prisons and contracted prisons and heads of probation delivery units must ensure that any new local policies that they develop because of this Policy Framework are compliant with relevant legislation, including the public-sector equality duty (Equality Act, 2010).

This Policy Framework is supported by the accompanying Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance designed to support delivery of the mandatory requirements set out in this Policy Framework. Whilst this guidance will not all be mandatory, any deviation from what is set out in this guidance must be documented locally. Any questions concerning deviation from the guidance can be sent to the contact details below.

Any such local procedures must be suitably analysed, or risk assessed to meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty, the Data Protection Act 2018, the family test and required financial and other resources.

'Governor' includes an officer for the time being in charge of a prison. Any reference to 'governor' in this Policy Framework includes any director of a contract managed prison. Any reference to 'Prison Group Director' (PGD) means the Deputy Director of contracted custodial services when referring to any contract managed establishment. Any reference to governor also includes the delegated functional head.

The term 'prisoner', for the purposes of this Policy Framework, applies to adults, children and young people.

How will this Policy Framework be audited or monitored?

Mandatory elements of this Policy Framework should be subject to local management checks and may be subject to self or peer audit by operational line management/HQ managers, when deemed appropriate by the managers with responsibility for delivery. Local management checks should be documented in establishments' Local Security Strategy. For further guidance on local management checks, please see section 22 in relation to interception, of the Interception and Restriction of Communications Operations Manual.

Mandatory elements of this Policy Framework will be subject to quality assurance checks by HMPPS Operational and Systems Assurance Group (OSAG) through the Security Audit.

In public prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) PGDs will monitor compliance with requirements set out within the Policy Framework in their prisons.

In contracted prisons and YOIs monitoring of compliance will be through the standard contract management processes

Resource Impact: This Authorised Communications Controls Policy Framework replaces *Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 04/2016 The Interception of Communications in Prisons and Security Measures*. It also provides updates relevant to a number of policies related to authorised communications controls. Therefore, many of the mandatory requirements are not new. There are new requirements that have an impact on resources, specifically in relation to the Enhanced Contact Vetting (ECV) scheme for terrorist prisoners and prisoners on remand for terrorism offences. This will be absorbed mostly by the Joint Extremism Unit, with the support of CT Policing. There will be some impact on the resource of establishments, including initial local resource implications as establishments update Local Security Strategies and align with new procedures. A detailed resource impact assessment accompanies this Policy Framework.

Contact

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For enquiries about Enhanced Contact Vetting please contact: ECV@justice.gov.uk

Deputy/Group Director sign-off: Richard Vince, Executive Director of Directorate of Security.

Approved by OPS for publication: Sarah Coccia and Ian Barrow, Joint Chairs, Operational Policy Sub-board, 28th May 2025.

Revisions

27 September 2022	Update to the contact email for the Approved Contact Scheme
15 February 2023	Update regarding the Approved Contact Scheme – which will be implemented in 2023 (exact date to be confirmed)
16 March 2023	Update to contact details on Page 3
5 April 2023	Revised Annex B
7 June 2023	Revised Annex B
27 October 2023	Revised Annex B
23 November 2023	Revised Annex B
05 January 2024	A number of amendments to ensure policy coverage of new communication platforms, to support improving operational compliance and resilience with regard to interception and PIN phone management and to more effectively align communication restrictions and monitoring with the relevant policies – specifically PSI 49/2011, PSI 18/2016 and PSI 43/2014.
06 November 2024	Revised Annex B
14 February 2025	Paragraphs 21.1 and 21.2 amended
8 April 2025	Revised Annex B
09 June 2025	Paragraph 23 updated to reflect new Enhanced Contact Vetting process. Redefined 'terrorist prisoner' in paragraph 3.13 to align with broader HMPPS policy. Deleted deficient sentence at the end of paragraph 9.8.
31 July 2025	Section 19 updated to reflect proactive sharing process
11 August 2026	Policy content relating to the interception of communications and the security of systems that enable this has been extracted and moved to the Interception of Communications Policy Framework. This refers to (previous) sections 6, 8-22, and related paragraphs elsewhere in the policy.

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Prison Rule 4 / YOI Rule 42(2) stipulates that special attention shall be paid to the maintenance of such relationships between a prisoner and their family, as are desirable in the best interests of both, and that prisoners shall be encouraged and assisted to establish and maintain such relations with persons and agencies outside prison as may, in the opinion of the governor, best promote the interests of his¹ family and his own social rehabilitation.
- 1.2 This is integral to a prisoner's right to family life as their rehabilitation and visits are crucial to sustaining relationships with close relatives, partners, and friends, where appropriate, and help maintain links within the community. However, certain restrictions are necessary to protect the public, prevent crime and ensure the security of the prison.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the Enhanced Contact Vetting (ECV) scheme, which requires the vetting of contacts for all convicted terrorist prisoners and prisoners on remand for terrorism offences and, if judged to be necessary and proportionate, [REDACTED]. To support the delivery of the ECV scheme, a dedicated ECV team has been established.
- 1.4 This Policy Framework applies necessary and proportionate controls under the ECV scheme to vet contacts and, where appropriate, restrict communications through visits, telephone calls, video calling and in writing (including email) to mitigate potential security threats and protect the public.
- 1.5 This Policy Framework will also provide clear guidance to decision makers in respect of the legal basis upon which controls can be put in place, to ensure compliance with the following:
 - The Investigatory Powers Act 2016.
 - Prison Rule 34 - permits the restriction of communications.
 - Prison Rule 35 – relating to visits.
 - Prison Rule 38 – outlining the grounds of legal visits.
 - Prison Rule 73 - permits governors to prohibit visits by a person to a prison or prisoner, in certain circumstances.
 - Young Offenders Institution (YOI) Rules (9 and 10): Parallels prison rules 34, for young offenders.
 - Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 The desired outcomes of this Policy Framework are that:
 - a) All prisoners can communicate and maintain ties with family and friends in a manner which does not compromise safety.
 - b) The process meets policy and legal requirements and ensures that the security and good order of the prison is maintained, and the public are protected.
 - c) HMPPS can, where necessary and proportionate and compatible with ECHR rights in accordance with Prison Rule 34/YOI Rule 9, **restrict** communications or impose conditions through telephone calls, video calls and written (including digital) methods for the following reasons:

¹ Please note that this paragraph quotes directly from the relevant legislation, and references to gender reflect the original text. In terms of the scope of this policy, the content should be considered applicable to all demographics.

- the interests of national security;
- the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of crime;
- the interests of public safety;
- securing or maintaining prison security or good order and discipline in prison;
- the protection of health or morals;
- the protection of the reputation of others;
- maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary; or
- the protection of the rights and freedoms of any person.

In accordance with Prison Rule 34(4) HMPPS can impose closed visits. Subject to paragraph (2) above, the Secretary of State may require that any visit, or class of visits, shall be held in facilities which include special features restricting or preventing physical contact between a prisoner and a visitor.

f) HMPPS can, where necessary and proportionate in accordance with Prison Rule 73/YOI Rule 9, **ban certain visitors** for the following reasons:

- the interests of national security;
- the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of crime;
- the interests of public safety;
- securing or maintaining prison security or good order and discipline in prison;
- the protection of health or morals;
- the protection of the reputation of others; or
- the protection of the rights and freedoms of any person.

However, Prison Rule 73 does not apply to visits by a member of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), Justice of the Peace or to prevent any visit by a legal adviser for the purposes of an interview under Prison Rule 38 or visit allowed by the IMB under Prison Rule 35(6).

g) Applications for the use of vetting controls and visitor bans are submitted and vetted in accordance with provisions of this policy framework and accompanying guidance. The applications are subject to proper scrutiny and review and are managed robustly throughout the lifespan of vetting, interception, and restriction. Additionally, all actions and decisions are recorded, retained and disseminated in line with auditing requirements.

3. **Requirements**

Definitions

3.1 **A contact of concern** may include:

- An ex-prisoner who was either (i) at any time category A or (ii) is managed under **[REDACTED]**², except where the person is a close relative in accordance with paragraph 3.12.
- A serving prisoner with a former prisoner who was either (i) at any time category A or (ii) is currently managed under **[REDACTED]** except where the person is a close relative in accordance with paragraph 3.12.
- Content or individuals/organisations where there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that it/they (including the prisoner themselves) promote or support acts

² **[REDACTED]**

of terrorism (as defined by Terrorism Act 2000) and extremism³ (further referred to as “terrorist concern” in this Policy Framework).

- An individual who is identified through intelligence or a reasonable suspicion as being at risk of coercion, harassment, domestic abuse, or harm by the prisoner, including intimidating a witness and/or threatening a victim.
- A person who has previously helped or planned to help the prisoner in an escape attempt or a person for whom there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that they are helping or planning to help the prisoner in an escape attempt.
- Where there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that contact would be placing a child’s welfare at risk.
- A person for whom there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that they are committing crimes on the prisoner’s or other prisoners’ behalf.
- A person for whom there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that they are managing the proceeds of the prisoner’s crimes.
- A person who is currently on bail or undergoing criminal investigation except where the person is a close relative in accordance with paragraph 3.12.
- A person subject to terrorism prevention and investigation measures or licence conditions which prohibit contact with the relevant prisoner.
- Correspondence between a prisoner who is under 18 and other person or organisation would not be in that prisoner’s best interests except where the person is a close relative in accordance with paragraph 3.12.
- Planning to use the visits to collect material for publication (e.g. journalistic material, webpage material) or where the prisoner is seeking publicity for their crimes or circumstances at that time, in circumstances where this is not permitted by *PSI 37/2010* and there is no overriding public interest in allowing contact.

3.2 Restriction is defined in Prison Rule 34(8) (b) / YOI Rule 9 (8)(b) as including restrictions and conditions in relation to the length, duration and frequency of communications. Prison Rule 34 / YOI Rule 9 applies to all communications with a prisoner, including communications in visits.

3.3 Particular Action refers to restricting a specific instance of communication (telecommunication, written correspondence or visits) between a prisoner and a particular contact (address/individual), where it is necessary and proportionate.

3.4 General Action refers to restricting all communications between a prisoner and a particular contact (address/individual), enabling governors to take longer term action where the risks/issues between a prisoner and a particular contact are not mitigated through particular action and restricting all communications between the prisoner and a particular contact is necessary and proportionate.

3.6 Intelligence Reports (IR) are used to submit and evaluate information, and to manage the dissemination of intelligence. They protect the source and also contribute to an audit trail of the intelligence.

3.7 Social visits are visits from friends, family members (including family days) or Official Prison Visitors (OPVs). OPVs are independent volunteers appointed by governors to visit and offer friendship to prisoners. For more information on OPVs and other types of visitors please see *PSI 16/2011 – Providing Visits and Services to Visitors*.

³ As defined by the UK government in March 2024 - New definition of extremism (2024) - GOV.UK

3.8 An official visit as defined by *PSI 16/2011 – Providing Visits and Services to Visitors.*, is a visit by the following persons. These visits do not require the prisoner to use a visiting order or count against his/her allowance of social visits:

- a) Legal advisers
- b) Offender managers/probation staff
- c) Social workers/Youth Offending Team (YOT) workers
- d) Pastoral visits by authorised and appointed faith leaders / representatives to visit those prisoners registered as belonging to their faith
- e) Bishops
- f) Samaritans
- g) MPs, Welsh Assembly Members or MEPs visiting in an official constituency capacity
- h) Officers of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
- i) Representatives of the Prison and Probation Ombudsman, the Legal Ombudsman, the Quality Care Commission, and the Office of the Legal Services Ombudsman
- j) Authorised researchers
- k) Embassy or consular officials
- l) Police officers or other public officials in discharge of their duty
- m) Visits from an accredited agent of the Treasury Solicitor, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Crown Prosecution Service, or the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, on production of the necessary authority from the department, to interview and to serve documents on a prisoner
- n) Staff of the Criminal Cases Review Commission
- o) Representatives of veterans organisations such as the Royal British Legion, the Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association when acting in an official capacity or assisting with resettlement issues
- p) Representatives of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) visiting in a professional capacity or any other organisation when the purpose of the visit is specifically and solely to discuss equality issues
- q) Immigration Officers or representatives of the United Kingdom Border Agency
- r) Visits by other officials or bodies to whom confidential access arrangements applies

This is not a definitive list. If a prisoner requests an official visit from an organisation or individual not listed above, governors may decide the conditions in which it takes place. Official status may also be extended to interviews by officers of other investigative bodies such as HM Revenue & Customs, the Security Service, the Serious Fraud Office, the Crown Prosecution Service and equivalent bodies of other countries. Legal visits are subject to Prison Rule 38 (YOI Rule 16).

3.9 A close relative is defined in paragraph 2.23 of *PSI 49/2011 – Prisoner Communication Services* as follows:

- Spouse/partner (including a person -whether of the same or different sex - with whom the prisoner was living as a couple in an established relationship immediately prior to imprisonment)
- Parent
- Child
- Brother, Sister (including half, or step - brothers and sisters)
- Civil Partner
- Fiancé or Fiancée (provided that the governor is satisfied that a bona fide engagement to marry exists)
- A person who has been acting in loco parentis to a prisoner
- A person to whom the prisoner has been in loco parentis.

- Grandparents
- Those who have clearly demonstrated the intention to register a civil partnership but have not yet done so may also be included within this definition of close relative for the purposes of any form of communication.

This definition of “close relative” is distinct from the interpretation of a prisoner’s “immediate family” which appears in *Chapter 2 Section 2 of the PSI 18/2016 – Public Protection Manual*.

- 3.10 *A terrorist prisoner* refers to (a) someone convicted of a specified terrorism offence as set out in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 19ZA of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, or (b) someone whose offence is deemed to have a terrorism connection, as defined in section 247A of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

Overview

- 4.1 Governors must ensure that local arrangements are in place to vet or restrict social communications in accordance with Prison Rules 34/YOI Rule 9 (restrictions or conditions (e.g. vetting contacts)), Prison Rules 73 YOI Rule 9 (visits), only where necessary and proportionate, and on the grounds set out in those Rules.
- 4.2 This policy provides guidelines regarding the vetting of contacts (known as the Enhanced Contact Vetting scheme) of terrorist prisoners, prisoners on remand for terrorism offences and, if judged to be necessary and proportionate, **[REDACTED]**. Governors must ensure that local arrangements are in place to implement the ECV scheme in accordance with section 9 of this Policy Framework.
- 4.3 Where the communications relate to **[REDACTED]**, Serious and Organised Crime (SOC)⁴ or Crime and Corruption Unit (CCU)⁵ nominals, the relevant regional lead must be consulted at the earliest opportunity – the decision on restrictions, conditions or monitoring however is the governors’.
- 4.4 Decisions to restrict communications or apply the ECV scheme, must be supported by evidence, or a reasonable assessment that such action is necessary and proportionate for its intended purposes and particular care needs to be taken to ensure that individuals are not targeted simply based on any protected characteristic.
- 4.5 *The Equality Act 2010* lists age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnerships; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation as protected characteristics, protected under the Act. Governors and their staff should, therefore, never discriminate against prisoners by applying the controls in this policy based on protected characteristics.
- 4.6 Governors may delegate their responsibility to officers to restrict or vet communications in accordance with Prison Rule 81/YOI Rule 85. Such delegation must be confirmed electronically using secure email/documentation and kept for audit purposes by the delegator. This delegation must be reaffirmed in an email when there is a change of governor, or in the case that a new member of staff is devolved the power.

⁴ Refers to individuals planning, co-ordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and/or as part of transnational networks. The main categories of serious offences covered are; child sexual exploitation and abuse, illegal drugs, illegal firearms, fraud, money laundering and other economic crime, bribery and corruption, organised immigration crime, modern slavery and human trafficking and cyber-crime.

⁵ HMPPS defines corruption as a person in a position of authority or trust who abuses their position for benefit or gain for themselves or for another person. In prison and probation services, this would include the misuse of a person’s role to plan or commit a criminal act, or a deliberate failure to act to prevent criminal behaviour. For a non-exhaustive list of examples of criminal activities and / or inappropriate behaviours that fall within this definition of corruption, alongside further information regarding the CCU, please refer to Counter Corruption and Reporting Wrongdoing Policy Framework (publishing.service.gov.uk).

- 4.7 Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this framework will be processed in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 2018*, UK General Data Protection Regulation and *PSI 04/2018 - Records, Information Management and Retention Policy*. Prisoner personal information must be requested, obtained, used and held in accordance with: [HM Prisons Prisoner Privacy Notice](#). Visitors personal information must be requested, obtained, used and held in accordance with the [HM Prisons Visitors Privacy Notice](#). A full Data Protection Impact Assessment has been completed, to accompany this Policy Framework. Contact dataprotection@justice.gov.uk for further advice.

Contact of Concern

- 5.1 It is evident within prisons that direct abuse of authorised prison communications through visits, telephone calls, video calls and/or written communications does occur, and is a tactic utilised by some cohorts of prisoners. Whilst most communications into the community will be for legitimate reasons, it is evidenced that some prisoners communicate with other prisoners, family, friends, or members of the same criminal network for reasons including to organise reoffending; share victim details; threaten or control others and convey illicit items⁶. Friends and family are also used as a third party to communicate with prisoners in other prisons and victims, and to continue illicit activity⁷.
- 5.2 Governors must ensure that arrangements are in place to identify potential contacts of concern, as set out within sections 3 and 4 in the *Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance*.
- 5.3 When a governor identifies a contact of concern, the Communications Action Decision Process, in section 3 of the *Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance*, can assist in determining what action(s) should be taken.
- 5.4 Having identified a contact of concern, governors must consider whether restrictions or conditions should be put in place and which restrictions, or conditions should be put in place. Contact must only be prevented to the extent to which it is necessary and proportionate.
- 5.5 Where a contact of concern (as described in paragraph 3.1), is identified, in order to restrict, intercept, or vet contacts (where relevant), it must be necessary and proportionate to do so in accordance with Prison Rules 34/YOI Rule 9 (restrictions or conditions (e.g. vetting contacts), 35A/YOI Rule 11 (interception), Prison Rules 73 YOI Rule 9 (visits) as relevant.

Communication Controls

- 5.6 There are **four** key communication mitigation options available to governors, having followed the Communications Action Decision Process, in section 3 in the *Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance*:
1. **Restrictions** (of mail, email, telephone, social video calling and/or internet use), see The Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework.

2. **Closed visits and banning visitors**, see paragraphs 7.1 to 7.8 and the *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate and Management of Security at visits (Closed Estate) Policy Frameworks*.
3. **Interception and Monitoring**, see The Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework
4. **Applying the Enhanced Contact Vetting (ECV) scheme**, see section 9.

5.7 Where imposing one form of communication mitigation, governors must consider whether additional communication restrictions, monitoring, visitor restrictions (see paras 7.1-7.8) or vetting (if not previously subject to the ECV scheme) are required. If the governor decides that:

- a) communications restrictions are required, this must be completed in accordance with the *Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework*. Where the ECV scheme applies, the governor must consider reviewing contact permissions under the scheme.
- b) communications monitoring is required, this must be completed in accordance with the *Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework*.
- c) visitor restrictions are required, they must complete Annex 2 - Detailed Guidance. Where the ECV scheme applies, the governor must consider reviewing contact permissions under the scheme.
- d) the ECV scheme should apply to a prisoner, they must complete Annex 8.

The Restriction⁸ of Communications⁹

6.1 Under Prison Rule 34 / YOI Rule 9 the Secretary of State may impose any restriction or condition, either generally or in a particular case upon the communications to be permitted between a prisoner and other persons if considered that the restriction or condition to be enforced does not interfere with the ECHR rights of any person under the Human Rights Act 1998; or

- a) is necessary on grounds specified in paragraph 6.2 below;
- b) reliance on the grounds is compatible with the ECHR right to be interfered with; and
- c) the restriction or condition is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved.

6.2 The grounds referred to above are:

- a) the interests of national security;
- b) the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of crime;
- c) the interests of public safety;
- d) securing or maintaining prison security or good order and discipline in prison;
- e) the protection of health or morals;
- f) the protection of the reputation of others;
- g) maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary; or
- h) the protection of the rights and freedoms of any person.

Restrictions on Telecommunications and Written Communications

6.3 Prisoners subject to the ECV scheme must only be permitted to communicate with those who are on their ECV Contact List. See Section 9 of this Policy Framework for further

guidance on the application of the ECV scheme. Prisoners who are subject to Approved Visitors Scheme (AVS) must only be permitted to communicate with those who are on their AVS Approved Contact List. See Section 4 of *PSI 43/2014 Management and Security of Category A Prisoners*. for further instruction on the application of AVS.

The Banning of Visitors

- 7.1 For all matters relating to the security, facilitation and management of visits, including applying closed visits, please see *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate and Closed Estate)* and *PSI 16/2011 – Providing Visits and Services to Visitors*.
- 7.2 For policy and guidance on all visitor bans please see the *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate and Closed Estate)*.
- 7.3 In addition to the reasons set out in the *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate paragraphs 5.43 – 5.45 and Closed Estate paragraphs 5.64 – 5.66)* and in accordance with the relevant grounds, visitors¹⁰ may also be banned where there is intelligence or a reasonable suspicion that the visit is promoting or supporting acts of terrorism (as defined by the *Terrorism Act 2000*) or extremism¹¹. This is further referred to as “terrorist concern”.
- 7.4 There must be clear justification for a ban, irrespective of which grounds are used. Bans on the grounds of “terrorist concern” may only be imposed if the policy requirements set out in paragraphs 4.25 to 4.44 of the *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate and Closed Estate)* are followed.
- 7.5 Where visit restrictions are being considered or subject to review where there is a “terrorist concern” (in accordance with paragraph 7.3), an Application for Banning Visitors (for terrorist-concern purposes only) at Annex 2 “Application for the Authorisation of Banning Visitors (for Terrorist Concern Purposes Only)” in the *Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance* must be completed. When doing so governors must consult the NCTCCC, before taking any action, although the decision is for the governor. Any comments from NCTCCC must also be included in the application, which must be sent to the NCTCCC upon completion. Copies should also be retained locally electronically for audit purposes.
- 7.6 NCTCCC must ensure they notify a prisoner and contact if they are subject to a visit/visitor ban under the grounds set out in paragraph 7.3 only, using Annex M found within the *Management of Security at Visits Policy Framework (Closed Estate)* and/or Annex K within the Closed Estate.
- 7.7 Governors must ensure each ban is reviewed at least every month in accordance with the *Management of Security at Visits (Open Estate and Management of Security at Visits Policy Framework (Closed Estate)*. Where the review relates to terrorist prisoners [REDACTED], the NCTCCC must be consulted as part of the review.
- 7.8 Further guidance on banning visitors under the grounds set out in paragraph 7.3 is set out in section 5 in the *Authorised Communications Controls Detailed Guidance*.

The Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications

¹⁰ Prison Rule 73 does not apply in relation to any visit to a prison or prisoner by a member of the independent monitoring board of the prison, or justice of the peace, or to prevent any visit by a legal adviser for the purposes of an interview under rule 38 or visit allowed by the independent monitoring board under rule 35(6).

¹¹ As defined by the UK Governments Counter Extremism Strategy 2015.

- 8.1 For the national policy requirements and guidance relating to the interception and monitoring of prisoner communications, and the security of prisoner communication systems (including the management of PIN phone and telecommunication systems, the Communications Compact and the checking of contacts, and the management of intercepted material, please refer to the *Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework*.

The Enhanced Contact Vetting scheme

Background

- 9.1 There have been several terrorist attacks committed in the UK by offenders who were under HMPPS and one (Manchester Arena) where the perpetrator had had contact with a serving terrorist prisoner. The chair of the Manchester Arena Inquiry concluded that the serving terrorist prisoner had a radicalising influence over the perpetrator of that attack and that measures should be put in place to restrict prisoner visits and monitor prisoner communications to mitigate the outward terrorist risk that a prisoner may pose to the public. Data in recent years shows that the terrorist prisoner population has been increasing and we expect this to continue, which will increase the risk of outward radicalising from prisons. Taking into account this and the Manchester Arena context, it is necessary and proportionate to apply conditions to the contacts for certain prisoner groups, in accordance with Prison Rule 34 / YOI Rule 9¹² and Prison Rule 73/YOI Rule 77.

Overview of the Enhanced Contact Vetting (ECV) scheme

- 9.2 All terrorist prisoners and people on remand for a terrorism offence for offences described in s247A of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 ('CJA 2003') are subject to the ECV scheme, unless there are exceptional circumstances for them not to be. If judged to be necessary and proportionate, [REDACTED].
- 9.3 People within scope of the ECV scheme are limited to a maximum of twenty social contacts and these contacts are subject to certain checks and approval before communication can begin, unless exceptions apply. The checks will be carried out by the Joint Extremism Unit and CT Policing. For someone who enters prison after the ECV scheme comes into force, communication between the in-scope person and a proposed contact is not permitted while the checks are ongoing, unless an exception applies. For someone in prison when the ECV scheme comes into force, communication is permitted until vetting is complete and any restrictions are implemented. Changes to a person's list of contacts cannot be made more often than every three months. The checks carried out on a person's contacts will be reviewed every three years unless circumstances justify an earlier review.
- 9.4 Governing governors, or a delegated operational manager, are the decision-makers under the ECV scheme. They will be supported and advised by the ECV team based in the Joint Extremism Unit.
- 9.5 The ECV scheme is designed to mitigate the outward terrorist risk posed by the following cohorts to their social contacts:
- 9.5.1 all prisoners serving a sentence that includes an offence described in s247A(2) CJA 2003 ('a qualifying sentence');

¹² Enhanced Contact Vetting does not apply to prisoners under 18 years old.

9.5.2 all prisoners on remand for terrorism offences described in s247A(2) CJA 2003; and

9.5.3 [REDACTED].

The ECV scheme applies automatically to all prisoners in categories A and B, above, upon their entry into custody, unless there are exceptional reasons for it not to. The ECV scheme may apply, if judged to be necessary and proportionate to manage the outward terrorist risk, to prisoners in category C above.

- 9.6 For category A terrorist offenders, the ECV scheme does not replace the AVS scheme (AVS) and, where applicable, both schemes operate simultaneously. Further guidance and information on AVS and the management of category A prisoners can be found in PSI 43/2014 Management and Security of Category A Prisoners and PSI 09/2015 The Identification, Initial Categorisation and Management of Potential and Provisional Category A / Restricted Status Prisoners.
- 9.7 Restrictions under the ECV scheme apply to visits, telephone calls and video calls. A prisoner is allowed social visits, telephone calls and video calls with only those contacts on their approved contacts list.
- 9.8 Restrictions under the ECV scheme also apply to written communications, including email. A prisoner to whom ECV applies can only send and receive mail from social contacts on their approved contacts list.
- 9.9 Prisons must verify that the recipient of outgoing mail is on the prisoner's approved contacts list. Prisons should verify that the sender of incoming mail is on the prisoner's approved contacts list.
- 9.10 Governing governors must ensure that they have Local Security Strategy procedures in place to operate the ECV scheme.

Contacts exempt from the ECV scheme

- 9.11 The following people do not need to be approved through the ECV scheme before being allowed to contact prisoners:

Official contacts in accordance with the definition under official visitors at paragraph 3.11.

Children

- No children will be vetted under ECV. Governing governors must follow the child contact procedures set out in the *Prison Public Protection Policy Framework*.
- Children can contact in-scope prisoners subject to the consent of their legal guardian and in accordance with child contact procedures and public protection procedures set out in the *Prison Public Protection Policy Framework*.

Legal advisers, others involved in the prisoner's legal proceedings and confidential access contacts outlined in Annex B of this Policy Framework:

- The prisoner's legal adviser (whose identity must be checked, following the process in paragraph 9.3 of the *Interception and Restriction of Communications Operations Manual*) if contacting the prisoner in a professional capacity, and verified by the prison in accordance with visitor verification policy in the *Management of Security at Visits Policy Frameworks*.

- People contacting the prisoner in connection with legal proceedings (but only if the prisoner's legal adviser (whose identity has been checked and verified) confirms they are connected to the prisoners' legal proceedings).
- Confidential access bodies outlined in Annex B this Policy Framework.

9.12 All legal/confidential contacts must be processed in accordance with the prisoners Communication Compact using Annex C in this Policy Framework.

9.13 A list of prisoner contacts must be kept locally for prisoners to whom the ECV scheme applies. Visits by people connected with the prisoner's legal proceedings should be included, for example the prisoner's solicitor/barrister or the solicitor/barrister's representative.

9.14 The privacy notice at [HM Prisons Visitors Privacy Notice](#) must be provided to all prospective contacts. The ECV team must also provide further information as to how the scheme will operate when making first contact with prospective contacts.

Operation of the ECV scheme – Adding and removing contacts to contact list

9.15 Where a new terrorist prisoner or prisoner on remand for terrorism offences is received at an establishment, the ECV team will send an induction pack with information on the ECV scheme and relevant forms to the Prison Prevent Lead (PPL) and the security department (or counter terrorism unit (CTU) in the high security estate (HSE)). The PPL will share these documents with the prisoner. If the prisoner cannot read, staff must make the prisoner verbally aware of the contents. Staff must provide further informal explanation or a translation if this is needed.

9.16 Where a prisoner subject to the ECV scheme applies to have someone added to their contacts list, or replaced on their contact list at a later stage, an application must be sent to the security department (or CTU in the HSE) requesting those changes.

9.17 Once completed, the application requesting changes to the contacts list will be returned to the PPL who will then share it with the ECV team, the prison security department/CTU and the visits booking clerk, the PIN clerk and the correspondence team (as required).

9.18 The ECV team must provide all prospective social contacts with information on identity verification, ECV checks and how the process may affect them.

9.19 Where prospective contacts decline to engage in the ECV process, they must be advised by the ECV team that they are likely to be refused contact with the prisoner. The PPL must also inform the prisoner of their prospective contact's decision.

9.20 Where existing contacts are suspended pending the outcome of the ECV checks, the prison must ensure that this is recorded on the prisoner's Mercury record and, where possible, on the visitor booking system, on PNOMIS / DPS and PIN phone system. Relevant teams must also be informed of the decision to suspend communication.

9.21 Once the ECV team has received the personal information required to start the vetting process and the first ID verification check has been completed, the subsequent checks carried out by the ECV team and partners can take up to eight weeks. If those checks are not completed within those eight weeks, the establishment may choose to add prospective contacts to a prisoner's approved contacts list until a decision is taken that they should not be on the list of approved contacts, following completion of the checks. The establishment and Regional Counter Terrorism Team (RCTT) should consider whether a period of monitoring should be authorised and carried out to mitigate any risks to do with

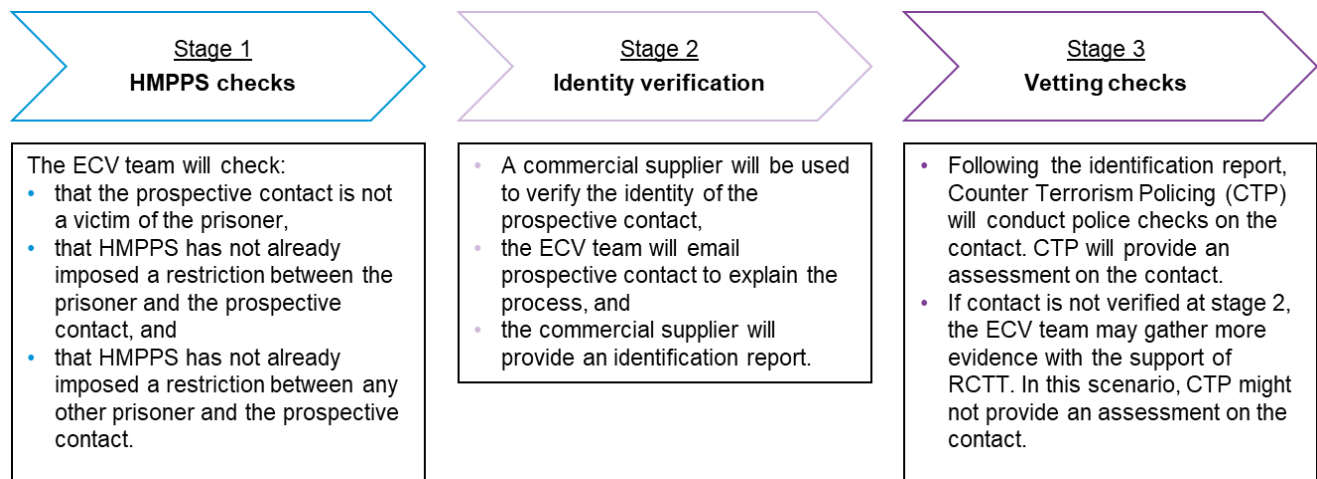
the prisoner having contact with members of the public who have not been through the ECV process.

- 9.22 The ECV team must log the prisoner's details along with the requested contacts' details on a centralised logging system. The establishment must log and keep a local record. The ECV team will track the progress of each request to add a new contact through the verification and checks stages.
- 9.23 Once the ECV scheme is applied to a prisoner, they will remain subject to ECV conditions should they transfer while checks are taking place.
- 9.24 Where a prisoner wishes to remove a contact from their contact list, they must apply to their security department (or CTU in the HSE).

Verification of contacts and further checks

- 9.25 Checks will be carried out in the following three stages (see Figure 1 for a summary).
- 9.26 First, the ECV team will carry out internal HMPPS checks on the prisoner after they receive an application for someone to be added as a prisoner's contact. This stage includes checks that the prospective contact is not a victim of the prisoner, whether HMPPS has already imposed a communications restriction between the prisoner and the prospective contact and whether HMPPS has imposed a restriction on the prospective contact and any other prisoner. If a restriction is in place between the prisoner and the prospective contact, the verification process will stop and the PPL will be advised that the application will not proceed. If a restriction is in place between the prospective contact and another prisoner, the ECV team will gather and share with the RCTT more information about the restriction after the third stage of checks. If the ECV team is satisfied that the prospective contact is not a victim of the prisoner and that a restriction is not in place between the contact and the prisoner, the application will proceed to stage two.
- 9.27 Second, a commercial supplier will be used to verify the identity of the prospective contact. To do this, the ECV team will email the prospective contact to explain the ECV scheme and process and begin the verification process. If an email address for the contact has not been provided by the prisoner, the ECV team will attempt to contact the person to ask for their email address. An email address will need to be provided for checks to be carried out. If in exceptional circumstances this can't be done then decision-makers will need to take into account the fact that these checks could not be done. If the contact does not speak English, the ECV team may need to use an interpretation service.
- 9.28 Third, if the prospective contact's identification is verified at stage two then the report produced by the commercial supplier will be sent to Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) so that it can conduct police checks on the contact. If the contact's identification cannot be verified at stage two, which might happen because the contact does not have the required identification documents, the ECV team may gather more information on the contact with the support of the RCTT and share this with CTP prior to checks. In this scenario, CTP might not be able to provide an assessment on the contact.

Figure 1 Summary of ECV vetting stages



Available actions following contact checks

- 9.29 Where a contact is assessed as presenting no concerns:
- the ECV team must be informed and must log the outcome centrally;
 - the ECV team must communicate the outcome to the PPL and RCTT;
 - the PPL and RCTT must inform the establishment and prisoner that the contact can be added; and
 - the establishment and RCTT should consider whether a period of monitoring should be authorised.
- 9.30 Where a contact is assessed as presenting concerns:
- the ECV team must be informed and must log the outcome centrally;
 - restrictions must be discussed and agreed at regional case management level;
 - the RCTT must inform the governing governor using a form of words;
 - the governing governor must make a decision whether to restrict the contact.
- 9.31 Where the governing governor, in discussion with the RCTT, decides that a contact must be restricted:
- the ECV team must be informed and must log the outcome centrally;
 - the governing governor will receive a form completed by the ECV team and the PPL asking them to authorise the restriction, following the RCTT's advice;
 - the governing governor must complete and return the authorisation form to the ECV team;
 - the ECV team must communicate the outcome to the PPL and RCTT;
 - the PPL and RCTT must inform the establishment; the prison security department/CTU and the visits booking clerk, the PIN clerk and correspondence team (as required) that the contact is restricted;
 - the restriction must be retained locally and be recorded on PNOMIS / DPS; and
 - the ECV team must explain the governing governor's decision both to the prisoner and the prospective contact.
- 9.32 Where a contact is restricted, sufficient information must be disclosed to the prisoner to explain why it is necessary and proportionate to do so in accordance with Prison Rule 34/YOI Rule 9 and Prison Rule 73/YOI Rule 77. However, information can be withheld from disclosure to the prisoner if it is necessary for one of the following reasons:
- in the interests of national security;

- for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of crime and disorder, including information relevant to prison security, good order and discipline;
- For the maintenance of prison security and good order and discipline in prison;
- for the protection of a third party who may be put at risk if the information is disclosed;
- if, on medical or psychiatric grounds, it is felt necessary to withhold information where the mental and/or physical health of the prisoner or a third party could be impaired;
- where the source of the information is a victim, and disclosure without their consent would breach any duty of confidence owed to that victim, or would generally prejudice the future supply of such information; and
- where disclosure is prohibited by law.

9.33 The prisoner must be advised of the appeal process via the prisoner request and complaint process. Appeals will be managed locally, with the support of RCTT where necessary and in line with the *Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework*.

9.34 All information must be stored, secured and handled in accordance with *PSI 04/2018 - Records, Information Management and Retention Policy*.

Contact limitations

9.35 Prisoners subject to the ECV scheme must have no more than 20 social contacts on their contact list. Contacts with multiple telephone numbers will only count as one social contact for the purposes of the ECV scheme. However, due to limitations with the PIN phone technology, each number will count as one contact on the PIN system and prisoners will still only be able to store 20 phone numbers at a time on the PIN system.

9.36 A prisoner subject to the ECV scheme may add to their contacts list until they reach a maximum of 20 contacts. It is only at this point that contacts may be substituted and once a substitution (or substitutions) has been made, further substitutions cannot be made for at least three months.

Discretionary contact

9.37 For prisoners subject to the ECV scheme who are in prison when the ECV scheme comes into force, current contact permissions must be maintained pending an ECV contact application, except where risks have been identified. Prisoners must complete and return their contact application form to the prison security department within four weeks of receiving it. Until ECV checks are complete, staff should be alert to any risks and consider monitoring of communications in accordance with sections of this policy framework. Where the governing governor deems it necessary and proportionate to mitigate identified risks, the contact will be restricted, in accordance with Prison Rules 34/YOI Rule 9 and Prison Rule 73/YOI Rule 77 , pending the outcome of their application. If the governing governor places a restriction on existing contacts in this scenario, both the prisoner and their contact must be notified and paragraph 9.32 must be followed.

9.38 For prisoners subject to the ECV scheme who enter prison *after* the scheme comes into force, while checks of contacts are ongoing governing governors may allow contact with close relatives (as defined by paragraph 3.12) and co-defendants (if communication with the latter relates to their conviction or sentence), unless it is necessary and proportionate to not allow that communication on one or more on the grounds established in para 6.2. All other social and inter-prisoner contacts will be restricted.

- 9.39 For the duration of the vetting checks, establishments must verify all contacts locally before the prisoner is allowed to communicate with them.
- 9.40 Where discretionary contact is telephone or video call, the contact's identity must be verified (see instructions within the *Interception, Monitoring and Security of Prisoner Communications Policy Framework* with respect to telephone calls) and an individual prisoner PIN account must be issued during induction into custody. Where discretionary contact is a visit, that must be a closed visit, pending the outcome of their ECV contact application. For visits, the contact must provide adequate means of identification on visiting, as outlined with the *Management of Security at Visits Policy Framework*. The governing governor must only allow discretionary visits once the initial application to add contacts has been completed by the prisoner and returned with suitable information, in accordance with paragraphs 9.16 – 9.18.
- 9.41 In exceptional circumstances, the governing governor may allow one-off communication between the prisoner who is subject to the ECV scheme and any other social contact who is not on the prisoner's contact list. RCTTs must be informed of any such decision by the governing governor and the communication should be supervised (e.g. a call should be monitored).

Interaction between the ECV scheme and Approved Visitor Scheme

- 9.42 For category A terrorist prisoners ECV does not replace the Approved Visitor Scheme (AVS) and, where applicable, both schemes will operate simultaneously. In order to avoid conflicting decisions on social visits, the governing governor, when considering restrictions under the ECV scheme, should take into account any decision made under the AVS.

Review Process

- 9.43 For convicted prisoners to whom the ECV scheme applies, a review (the "substantive review") of both the application of the ECV scheme and the prisoner's contact list must take place no later than three years after the decision to approve the first contact(s) to be added to the prisoner's contact list. The three-year deadline for the substantive review does not reset if changes are made to the contact list during that period.
- 9.44 First, the substantive review must consider whether the ECV scheme should still apply to the prisoner. For convicted terrorist prisoners (i.e. group A in paragraph 9.6), staff must check the expiry date of the qualifying sentence(s). If it has not expired when the review is done, the ECV scheme will continue to apply to the prisoner unless there are exceptional circumstances for it not to apply any longer. For convicted prisoners where the qualifying sentence has expired and for all convicted prisoners to whom ECV has been applied on a discretionary basis (i.e. group C in paragraph 9.6), staff must consider in the substantive review whether it is necessary and proportionate for ECV to continue to apply.
- 9.45 Staff may become aware before the substantive review point that the qualifying sentence of a terrorist prisoner has expired (e.g. if the prisoner raises a complaint to say that their qualifying sentences have expired and they therefore must be reviewed). If this is the case, they must consider as soon as possible whether it is necessary and proportionate for the ECV scheme to continue to apply to the prisoner.
- 9.46 For prisoners on remand, the substantive review must be carried out at least every twelve months, starting from the date of the initial decision to approve contacts to be added to the prisoner's contact list.

- 9.47 Second, if it is decided that the ECV scheme will continue to apply to the prisoner, the prisoner's full contact list must be reviewed. This must involve renewal of checks carried out by partners to consider whether any approved contacts need to be restricted. It must also involve a reconsideration of decisions to not allow a contact to be added to a prisoner's contact list. Where a contact has been removed from a prisoner's contact list at the request of the prisoner and added again later, the vetting checks done on that contact do not need to be reviewed until the next substantive review.
- 9.48 Certain contacts might be reviewed on an ad hoc basis (the "ad hoc review"). For example, prisoners must notify the prison immediately if there is a change of circumstance (e.g. any criminal proceedings brought against a contact) to do with someone on their contact list, which might trigger a review of that contact. A review should also be considered where there is a reasonable suspicion (e.g. as a result of intelligence) that it is necessary and appropriate to put in place restrictions on a contact that has been approved in accordance with Prison Rule 34/Prison Rule 73/YOI Rule 9/YOI Rule 77 are satisfied. Any ad hoc reviews do not reset the time-limits for the substantive review, nor remove the need for a substantive review to be done.
- 9.49 The ECV team must generate (when initial action is taken), log and track the dates of substantive and ad hoc reviews on the centralised logging system for each contact. The ECV team must inform establishments of upcoming deadlines for a substantive review (i.e. the three-year deadlines for convicted prisoners and one-year deadlines for remand prisoners).
- 9.50 The ECV team must lead the substantive and ad hoc reviews and provide advice to governing governors for them to make any decisions that are needed. Where restrictions are recommended, the process outlined in paragraph 9.32 must be followed.
- 9.51 The prisoner must be informed of the date by which their substantive review must be carried out and that there might be reviews before this point for any of the reasons explained above.

Inter-prison communications

- 9.52 For prisoners subject to the ECV scheme, if they wish to contact a prisoner in a different prison, ECV checks must be considered, and approval must be sought in accordance with paragraph 6.4. If approved, they will be included in the prisoner's list of 20 contacts.

Safety

- 9.53 Prisoners, particularly those new to custody, may be vulnerable to violence or self-harm if social contact is delayed or not allowed under the ECV scheme. Staff should be alert to any signs that the prisoner's risk of harm to themselves or others has increased and support them appropriately. The case management processes described in the *Prison Safety Policy Framework*, such as Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan (CSIP) and Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) may, where appropriate, be useful to manage risk and contribute to prison safety. Further requirements, guidance and information about managing prisoner safety can be found in the *Prison Safety Policy Framework*.

Sanctions

- 10.1 Where breaches or attempted breaches of restrictions are identified, governors must consider appropriate sanctions in accordance with *PSI 05/2018 - Prisoner Discipline Procedures (Adjudications)*, and in the most serious of cases, referral to the police.

Criminal Offence

- 11.1 Where there is evidence of a possible criminal offence, the matter must be referred to the prison security and intelligence department for consideration of a referral to the police for investigation which must be dealt with in accordance with the Crime in Prison Referral Agreement. Where the possible criminal offence is committed by a terrorist or **[REDACTED]** prisoner, or the offence may potentially be terrorist in nature, the prison security and intelligence department should refer to the counter terrorism Annex to the Crime in Prison Referral Agreement.

