



Juliet Lyon
Chair, Independent Advisory Panel

MoJ ref: ADR79753

By email.

23 July 2020

Dear Juliet,

UPDATE ON ROLLOUT OF VIDEO CALLING IN PRISONS

I am writing to provide you with an update on the delivery programme for video calling in prisons and the youth estate.

We recognise that family contact provides a crucial lifeline for those in our care and that this has become an even more pressing issue following the temporary cancellation of prison visits in March. Families and friends can be a positive influence on those in the criminal justice system, and strengthening the ties individuals have with their families and friends is one of many important factors to successful rehabilitation. We know that reoffending is 39% lower for prisoners who receive contact from their family, compared to those who do not.

Recognising the vital role that video calling can play in helping those in our care, we have worked at speed to bring in new technology. We announced in May that we would be introducing secure family video calls at prisons and young offender institutes across England and Wales, and I am pleased to inform you that the facility is now available at 30 establishments. The annex to this letter details the status of each establishment in the programme.

Slightly different arrangements will apply in our contracted estate and Contract Management Group have written separately to the Privately Managed Prisons setting out options for their further deployment. I understand that they will enter their own contractual arrangements and anticipate that they too will be in a similar position to the public prisons.

There are a number of steps that each establishment must undertake before it can offer live calls to families, including training staff, completing test calls, and deciding the times and days they will offer calls so that their bespoke booking portal can be built. In addition, the team have had a number of problems to overcome with local networks, including ensuring access and dealing with slow speeds. But I am pleased with progress to date despite the challenges. By the end of August 2020: video calls will be available to all female prisoners and to all young people in the youth estate; equipment will be deployed across the entire public estate; and the majority of the male estate will have completed their test calls and will be rolling calls out to their whole population. I should explain that it takes an average of three weeks from delivery of equipment for a prison to make video calls available, but the pace depends on prison regimes locally.

We are always conscious of the need to maintain security and keep the public safe. That is why we are using technology specifically designed for use in prisons. Software called Purple Visits ensures that video calling can be delivered in a secure way and in line with an acceptable use policy. The software has a

range of built-in security features; for example, all visitors need to verify their identity and be approved before a call takes place. If an unapproved face appears on the call, the call will automatically pause. In addition to the software security features, prison staff monitor calls via a separate terminal and can pause or terminate calls if necessary. Unfortunately, free-to-use video calling applications do not offer the level of protection required in prisons and would not be suitable.

As part of our emergency solution, prisoners use secure laptops to conduct video calls. In some prisons, prisoners make a request for a call with their family member/friend. In other prisons, the request is made by the family member/friend via the Purple Visits app. Each prisoner has access to one video call per month, lasting 30 minutes.

Whilst this current video call service is a temporary measure, intended for use whilst contact with family and friends is limited as a result of social distancing measures, we are considering a longer-term solution for video calls in line with Lord Farmer's recommendations, focussing on those who do not receive face-to-face visits under normal circumstances. I am convinced that technology can play an important role in helping offenders turn their lives round, both within prison and after release.

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any questions about the rollout of video calling please contact Simon Marshall, Deputy Director Rehabilitation and Support Services who oversees family services on Simon.Marshall@justice.gov.uk or e-mail familyservices.management@justice.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP

ANNEX A

Establishments operating live calls

Askham Grange	Full Sutton	Send
Berwyn	Garth	Stocken
Bronzefield	Gartree	Styal
Buckley Hall	Guys Marsh	Swinfen Hall
Bullingdon	Hewell	Thorn Cross
Chelmsford	High Down	Usk
Cookham Wood YOI	Hull	Wayland
Deerbolt	Leeds	Whitemoor
Downview	Leicester	Werrington YOI
Drake Hall	Long Lartin	Wetherby YOI
Durham	Low Newton	
Eastwood Park	Onley	
East Sutton Park	New Hall	
Feltham YOI	Pentonville	
Foston Hall	Prescoed	

Prisons being trained/having equipment delivered/holding test calls/Addressing local configuration issues

Aylesbury	Hatfield	Manchester	Swaleside
Bedford	Haverigg	Moorland	Swansea
Belmarsh	Highpoint	North Sea Camp	The Mount
Birmingham	Hindley	Norwich	Wakefield
Brinsford	Hollesley Bay	Nottingham	Warren Hill
Bristol	Holme House	Oakhill STC	Wealstun
Brixton	Humber	Parc (YOI)	Wandsworth
Bure	Isis	Peterborough	Whatton
Cardiff	Isle of Wight	Portland	Winchester
Channings Wood	Kirkham	Preston	Woodhill
Coldingley	Kirklevington Grange	Ranby	Wormwood Scrubs
Dartmoor	Lancaster Farms	Rainsbrook STC	Wymott
Elmley	Lewes	Risley	
Erlestoke	Leyhill	Rochester	
Exeter	Lincoln	Spring Hill	
Featherstone	Lindholme	Stafford	
Ford	Littlehey	Standford Hill	
Frankland	Liverpool	Stoke Heath	
Grendon	Maidstone	Sudbury	