**Gold Briefing – Secure Video Calling Update (01.10.21)**

**Purpose and Summary**

The purpose of this briefing is to provide further information about returning to the interim policy for secure video calls, now that social visits have resumed across the estate for prisons which have progressed to Stage 2 and Stage 1 of the National Framework. Further details are provided below which should be shared with staff, prisoners and young people.

POMC has agreed that it is now appropriate for prisons to align their secure video calling offer with the published [policy](https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/policies-and-subjects/policy-frameworks/secure-social-video-calling-interim-policy-framework). This allows the offer of one free call per prisoner/ young person per month with discretion to provide more under specific circumstances as outlined below. Establishments should take account of when families and children are available for calls and consideration should be given to offering secure video calling in the evenings and at weekends where staffing levels allow.

Secure video calling will remain a permanent feature post-pandemic and we are developing a long-term policy that will take into consideration learning from research during the pandemic and the recommendations of Lord Farmer’s reviews for maintaining family ties.

These changes will go live from **01/11/21** in Stage 2 and 1 sites. For sites still at stage 3, these changes will go live from the date of Stage 2 progression

**Additional Secure Video Calls**

In the exceptional circumstances where social visits are either partially or fully suspended as recommended by the Outbreak Control Team (OCT) and accepted by Gold at a particular establishment, additional secure video calls can continue to be offered and will be funded centrally.

Establishments will be required to fund any additional secure video calls through local budgets (unless social visits are suspended as outlined above), and separate finance instructions on the procedures for charging these calls will follow this briefing.

Additional secure video calls may be offered at the Governor’s discretion, for wellbeing reasons (e.g. those who are primary carers for children or conducive to the wellbeing of the prisoner, young person or their immediate family) or in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where a social visit is not possible and a social video call is the only way of meeting the exceptional need). Any decisions about allocation of extra calls must be made without bias or discrimination.

Children and young people held in the Youth Custody Service (YCS) estate may continue to have access to additional calls as and when needed. Governors must satisfy themselves that there is capacity for one call for all prisoners and young people to be facilitated before additional calls are offered and that a fair and consistent approach is adapted to any additional call offer.

Please contact COVID19.RegimesOpsGuidance1@justice.gov.uk with any queries in the first instance.

**Supporting Communications Materials**

The following materials have been provided to support adult establishments when communicating this change to staff and prisoners. YCS establishments should continue to refer to previously issued comms materials. These can be supplied again on request via the email mailbox address above.

