

Safety briefing March 2021

Assessing risk of harm in prisoners attending court and other appointments by video link

Staff must be aware that prisoners are just as likely to receive bad news or unfavourable or unexpected outcomes on video calls as when attending court or being visited by family in person. Engaging with prisoners before and after a video call is vital. Staff must assess risk on the basis of official information, as well as the individual's presentation. They should escalate any concerns (including opening an ACCT, where appropriate) and record and share any new risk information.

Remain alert to the risks

Remember the safety risks are no different for video calls than they are when prisoners attend an appointment in person, and staff must remain alert to the risks. This applies equally to social and official calls and meetings. If concerned, staff must consider opening an ACCT or making a CSIP referral.

Court appearances, parole hearings and family services are examples of video contact. Prisoners could receive unexpected news, such as: being remanded in custody when they had expected to be bailed, receiving a longer sentence than anticipated, or bad news about family members. This can change their level of risk to self or others. Staff should assess risk using official information, such as the court record, the prisoner's account of what happened and their reaction to it.

Engaging with prisoners after a video call

Speak to the person

Ask them how the video call went

Follow it up (with healthcare/open an ACCT/ make a CSIP referral)

Explain the situation to others (tell wing staff immediately, record and share information)

Staff must consider all relevant information when identifying risk and not rely solely on behaviour and comments. To keep prisoners SAFE, staff should speak to individuals before and after video calls. Information of concern must be recorded and handed over. This includes shift handovers and to other relevant areas and departments, such as work, education and healthcare. It must be recorded on NOMIS, wing observation books and in ACCT/CSIP-related documents.

Guidance for staff

Every prison has its own local processes for carrying out safety, wellbeing and health screening checks on their prisoners following a video call.

Staff should familiarise themselves with these processes and make sure that they understand their role within them.

Further information about risk identification is available at the link below.

If you do not believe there is a risk of suicide but the individual would benefit from further support, peer supporters (including Listeners, or Chaplaincy) may be able to help after a difficult video call.

Contact us: SaferCustodyPolicyandLearning@justice.gov.uk.

Have you seen our intranet page? Visit us at <https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/support/safety/> or find us at the 'Support' tab on the intranet.

Further information: The safety self-assessment tool contains prompts for local safety assessments of video processes in the First Night and Early Days section. A risk identification toolkit, advice on risk identification and information sharing and other resources are also available.

<https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/groups/safety/safety-self-assessment-tool-sat>

https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1081595/Risk-Identification-Toolkit.pdf

<https://intranet.noms.gsi.gov.uk/support/safety/risk-identification-and-information-sharing>