**Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service (UPC)**

**Stakeholder Briefing - November 2022**

**Summary**

The **Unwanted Prisoner Contact (formerly Victims Helpline)** is anational service that prevents victims including survivors of domestic abuse, or any member of the public, receiving unwanted contact from prisoners.

It is a hugely important service. It protects victims and witnesses from unwanted contact. This is especially important if the victim is vulnerable or subject to controlling or coercive behaviour, exploitation, harassment, or intimidation. Preventing contact is critical in stopping further harm or trauma, maintaining confidence, and supporting prosecutions.

It can be used by anyone who wishes to STOP contact from prisoners. This includes

* + - stopping unwanted letters,
		- blocking phone calls,
		- texts or
		- messages from a prisoner.

Run by HMPPS this is a service that anyone can use irrespective if they are for example:

* a member of the public (including **all victims** of crime),
* the police,
* probation practitioner/ victim liaison officer acting on behalf of the victim,
* a family member or friend acting on behalf of the victim,
* or an organisation working on behalf of the victim to block the contact i.e., solicitors, victim and/or domestic abuse charities.

The process to STOP contact is simple, fast, and easy. The online form should be used as the first step in reporting unwanted contact, rather than emailing or calling in the request.

The service can be contacted in a number of ways:

* + - Go to: [www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact](http://www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact) or use the QR code below:



* Email: unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk
* Telephone: 0300 060 6699, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm

We would strongly encourage the use of the [GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact) form which is accessible via the link or QR code above.

The [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact) form also allows a third party to share information on behalf of a victim or any member of the public, with or without their consent.

We would prefer that a request for blocking contact is made using the process above rather than a call directly made to the prison.

**Concerned about a prisoner being released**

A victim can also contact the service if they are worried about someone **being released from prison**. For enquiries of this nature please contact the service via:

* Email: unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk
* telephone: **0300 060 6699, open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm**

**Frequently asked questions**

**Who can request a block on unwanted prisoner contact?**

* Anyone can submit a request to the Unwanted Prisoner Contact service to stop contact or share information. This includes:
	+ any member of the public (including **all victims** of crime),
	+ the police,
	+ probation practitioner/ victim liaison officer
	+ a family member or friend on behalf of the victim,
	+ or an organisation working on behalf of the victim i.e., solicitor, victim, or domestic abuse charities.
* Third parties can share information about direct victims of a prisoner’s offence to assist the prison to manage and restrict contact with victims. This is managed separately to no-contact requests.
* The establishment will receive and deal with the request in accordance with the law and national policy.

**What happens once a request has been made?**

* The Unwanted Prisoner Contact service will pass on the request to the holding establishment within one working day.
* For no-contact requests (including those made on someone's behalf and with their consent) the prison will aim to apply immediate restrictions.
* Requests made without consent of the individual will need be considered on a case-by-case basis by prisons in line with prison rules and HMPPS policy and guidance.

**What happens now I have submitted a request?**

* Once the request has been submitted it will be sent to the relevant prison, usually within one working day, for a decision to be made. The prison will consider the request to initiate communication restrictions in line with prison rules, HMPPS policy and guidance. This will usually be made within a further two working days. Please note in periods of high demand, this may take longer.

**Will I be informed of the outcome?**

* The person making the request will be informed of the decision, and any action taken, using the contact details provided.

**Will the prisoner be informed of the request?**

* If prisons restrict communication with the direct victim/s of the prisoner’s offence, prisoners will be told they are not permitted to contact their victim. HMPPS policy does allow prisoners to apply for contact with their victims, and where the victim is a close relative and wishes to receive this contact this may be permitted.
* Where a member of the public, or third party with the individual’s consent, makes a direct no-contact request, the member of the public must be informed that the prisoner will be notified in writing that they are not permitted to contact the person subject to the request.
* If prisons restrict communication following information or intelligence about the risk a prisoner may pose to someone, the prisoner will be told the name of the person they are not permitted to contact.

**What do I do if the contact continues?**

* Please submit the form again and give us as much information on how this contact is continuing. You can also report it to the police.

**What information do prisons need to prevent contact?**

* Please provide a comprehensive list of names, addresses and all telephones numbers that you wish removed. Where requests are being made without the consent of the victim, providing further details and a rationale will support the prison in their assessment of this request.

**Is there anything prisons will need to consider as part of a no-contact request?**

* If a no-contact restriction is requested, and there is somebody else at the address/using the number requiring access (e.g., a child), then the prison will first need to identify a solution with the victim to enable the restriction to be applied.

**What if the requester wishes to reinitiate contact?**

* The requester (or individual, if the request was made by a third party) can email the Unwanted Prisoner Contact team requesting to re-establish contact. This will be forwarded to the establishment holding the prisoner.