



**16<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

**IOCCO Response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP's)  
Prison Communications Inquiry**

In November 2014 HMIP was asked by the former Minister of Justice to *"investigate the circumstances surrounding the interception of telephone calls from prisoners in England and Wales to the offices of Members of Parliament (MPs), and to make recommendations to ensure that there are sufficient safeguards in place to minimise the risk of such calls being recorded inappropriately in the future."*

We are pleased to note that the report acknowledges the weaknesses that we have identified in the systems and processes for protecting confidential calls. In the last 4 years we have made over 300 recommendations in this area. The inquiry recommendations also address a number of the concerns and inadequacies we have voiced over a number of years with regard to the policies, training and awareness in this area. Most recently in our March 2014 report the Rt Hon. Sir Anthony May said:

*"the numerous policy documents governing the interception of prisoners communications are fragmented, overlapping and contradictory in places and this makes it difficult for the prisons themselves to understand the requirements fully and for our inspectors to conduct the oversight. I am disappointed that there has not been any progress on these matters. I reiterate that NOMS must get to grips with these issues and put in place clear and defined policy and risk assessment documents for the interception of prisoners' communications. Our experience shows that the prisons are trying extremely hard to comply with the various policies in this area, but they are in need of clear direction and better quality policy."*

We hope that the HMIP inquiry report and recommendations will help NOMS to improve the systems and procedures in this area to ensure there are adequate protections in place for communications between prisoners and their MPs and other confidential organisations (e.g. legal calls).

Notes for Editors:

HMIP published an interim report on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014 which set out the urgent measures taken by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to prevent MP's calls from being recorded or listened to and provided some preliminary findings. Today HMIP has published its final report and has made a number of recommendations to address the shortcoming. We were happy to assist the inquiry and did so by providing details of our non statutory oversight regime in prisons, an analysis of the recommendations emanating from our inspections that were relevant to the inquiry and, a member of the inquiry team also accompanied an IOCCO inspector on one of our inspections.

IOCCO is an independent oversight body – independent of Government and Parliament, led by the Interception of Communications Commissioner.

In 2002 the Home Secretary asked the Interception of Communications Commissioner to undertake non-statutory inspections of the interception of prisoners' communications in prisons in England and Wales. In 2008 IOCCO was invited to undertake inspections of the Northern Ireland Prisons by the then Director General of Northern Ireland Prisons.

In 2014 IOCCO conducted 100 prison inspections. 492 recommendations emanated from those inspections, an average of 5 recommendations for each prison. For more detail about these recommendations please see IOCCO's March 2015 report:

[http://www.iocco-uk.info/docs/IOCCO%20Report%20March%202015%20\(Web\).pdf](http://www.iocco-uk.info/docs/IOCCO%20Report%20March%202015%20(Web).pdf)