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THE HOME SECRETARY'S OFFICE → 99309572

NO.043

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**RESTRICTED-SECURITY****ANNEX C****STRIP-SEARCHING - BACKGROUND**

Section 39 of the Prison Rules 1964 states that every prisoner may be searched as the governor thinks necessary. This includes strip-searching prisoners after visits or trips to court.

Strip-searching is a routine security measure to which all prisoners are subject. It enables prison officers to detect small items of contraband, such as drugs or, even more important, a weapon, which may be concealed about the person and which might not be discovered in an ordinary rub-down search. The prospect of being strip-searched undoubtedly acts as a deterrent. We would be neglecting our duty if we did not take reasonable precautions (including strip-searches where necessary) to ensure the safety of our staff, other prisoners and the general public.

We do recognise that strip searches can be embarrassing: staff are well aware of the need to carry them out with as much consideration and courtesy as possible, and only when necessary. Prison Rule 39 provides that a prisoner shall be searched in as seemly a manner as is consistent with discovering anything concealed; that prisoners shall only be stripped and searched by an officer of the same sex; and that no prisoner shall be stripped and searched in the sight of another prisoner or in the sight or presence of an officer of the opposite sex.