Summary of differences between current and previous versions of Section 5 and Section 7 Guidance

An earlier version of the Section 5 Guidance was created in July 2013 and first available to GCHQ staff from August 2013. There were no material differences between it and the current Section 5 Guidance.

Prior to that, there was an earlier version of the Section 5 Guidance, which was made available to GCHQ staff in June 2010. The only material difference between that version and the current Section 5 Guidance was that, while the requirement of proportionality was stipulated, the guidance did not give examples of considerations to be taken into account when assessing proportionality.

Prior to that advice on completing a s.5 template warrant was made available to staff in June 2009. This was practical advice on completing a warrant.

An earlier version of the Section 7 Guidance was available to GCHQ staff from August 2011. The material differences between that version and the current Section 7 Guidance were:

- While the requirement of proportionality was stipulated, the August 2011 guidance did not give examples of considerations to be taken into account when assessing proportionality;

- The August 2011 guidance did not address the review process for internal approvals, or cancellations of internal approvals; and

- The August 2011 guidance did not specify the need to rejustify the necessity and proportionality of relying on existing section 7 internal approvals as part of the class authorisation renewal process.

Prior to that, guidance in relation to Section 7 was contained within the form for requesting an internal approval. In the version available from September 2008, this explained the requirements that a CNE operation be justified (i.e. meets one of GCHQ’s authorised functions), necessary (i.e. cannot be achieved more effectively through other means) and proportionate (i.e. restricts the interference to the minimum necessary to achieve the desired outcome and avoids collateral intrusion as far as possible).