Decision log number: PCCG-2024-027



**MINUTES OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

**HELD BOTH REMOTELY ON TEAMS AND IN PERSON IN HAWTHORN MEETING ROOM,**

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 30th OCTOBER 2024**

**Present:** Jean Munton - Chair, Independent Custody Visitor (JM)

Mike Hallinan– Independent Custody Visitor (MH)

Alan Heywood – Independent Custody Visitor (AH)

Linda Mason - Independent Custody Visitor (LM)

Andrea Williams - Independent Custody Visitor (AW)

Mike O’Farrell - Independent Custody Visitor (MO)

Lisa Langley - Independent Custody Visitor (LL)

Alexandra Robinson - Independent Custody Visitor (AR)

David Salmon - Independent Custody Visitor (DS)

Richard Holland- Independent Custody Visitor (RH)

Also in attendance:

Nicola Warren - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (NW)

Ceri Hiscox - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CH)

Inspector Tom Delaney – Custody Newport (TD)

Inspector Laurence Carrington – Governance and Assurance (LC)

***The meeting commenced at 6:06 p.m.***

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from B Skelding, Chief Inspector  C Morgan and Custody Nurse, L Price. |  |
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| **2.** | **Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.  **Action 2.**  NW confirmed the new cell usage form provided by the custody unit was helpful in providing the required information to assist Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in completing their visit report forms. A copy of the form was viewed by all at the meeting. TD confirmed all staff were aware of the form and would be able to assist with providing it to ICVs.  NW asked TD to include a copy of the role description for an ICV in the ICV folder within the custody unit and display a copy on the notice board to ensure all staff were aware of the role.  NW advised the meeting that an input was given to new CDOs to inform them of the role of an ICV and it would be useful to do the same for new Sergeants. TD to contact the training Sergeant to arrange.  **Action 3.**  TD provided an update on the status of the custody units. Ystrad Mynach remained closed for refurbishment and was expected to reopen on the 3rd December 2024. TD shared a virtual tour with the meeting of the refurbished Ystrad Mynach unit. The refurbishment involved inclusion of a separate area within the refurbished unit for juveniles and vulnerable detainees, with a discreet booking-in area and waiting area. There would also be a soft interview room with a less clinical feel for juveniles and vulnerable adults. There would be 8 interview rooms within the unit. There would be 32 cells with a view to increase by 10 in April 2025 via the use of ‘portacells’ at the rear of the unit. The Newport unit would still be utilised as an overflow unit for key dates which would increase cell capacity to 59 in total.  TD confirmed the unit had to be searched and kept sterile prior to opening and therefore would not be available for the visitors to conduct a tour of the unit prior to its opening.  TD informed the meeting every cell would be fitted with CCTV, a 2-way intercom, a toilet and robust sink. TD confirmed a decision had been made not to install life sign within the cells as it was not an effective system. Life sign was used for monitoring the breathing of a detainee. The was because it was found that alarms would sound when detainees chose to sleep on the floor, had shallow breath or had put a blanket over their head, so it was not a failsafe product.    TD assured the meeting checks on detainees were routinely conducted every 30 minutes and all cells would have CCTV installed.  **Action 4.**  TD advised the meeting that the overall number of detainees had increased in line with national numbers and had not identified anything to suggest any difference with other forces. All juvenile arrests were scrutinised and alternative action considered where possible. All arrests where juveniles were held between the hours of midnight and 5am were discussed at a multi-agency panel.  This involved social workers and youth offender service workers who scrutinised the custody journey to ensure the treatment of the juvenile and to determine whether their stay in custody was necessary.    **Action from 24th April 2024**  **Action 4.**  NW to send Performance Matrix and Framework report to TD to review.  TD shared a copy of a redacted custody record which could be obtained from the custody desk upon request and with the consent of the detainee. NW confirmed the redacted custody record was called an ICV report on the policing system and that it should be handed back to the custody Sergeant for destruction prior to ICVs leaving the unit. | **TD**  **TD**  **NW/TD** |
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| **3.** | **Vice Chair Nominations** |  |
|  | Visitors were requested to provide their nominations by email prior to the meeting. MH had volunteered to undertake the role should no other visitor be interested. As a result of a vote at the meeting MH accepted the role of the Vice Chair.  NW thanked MH for volunteering for the role. |  |
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| **4.** | **Custody Update** |  |
|  | TD advised the meeting that detainee wait times had been an issue previously, but changes had been made which had seen this reduce.  TD informed the meeting that the Health Care Practitioner (HCP) provision would be outsourced from January. The HCP establishment would remain the same but would operate under a different employer.  A discussion was held regarding detainees that required prescribed medication and the timeliness of administering it whilst in custody as there appeared to be delays.  TD confirmed the HCPs were governed by Mountain Health Care and all clinical guidance, governance, and authorisation to prescribe medication to detainees was sought from there. TD agreed to raise concerns with the Lead Nurse.  NW asked about staffing issues as the ICVs had mentioned it a few times in the visit report forms. TD advised the unit was up to full establishment. | **TD** |
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| **5.** | **Scheme Update and Performance Framework Update** |  |
|  | NW to contact TD on the 1st December to confirm the opening of Ystrad Mynach custody unit.  NW informed the meeting that unfortunately one member had left the scheme due to moving out of the Gwent area. The OPCC had sent a card wishing him well for the future as well as an appreciation certificate for his contribution to the scheme.  NW informed the meeting there were 14 scheduled visits in the past quarter, 13 visits were completed with 1 missed visit due to sickness.  NW requested that the ICVs conduct visits across a random spread of days and times to ensure they view the custody unit across a range of demand scenarios, including weekends and evenings.  NW reminded visitors if they were unable to conduct a scheduled visit, they should liaise with other ICVs without delay to attempt to arrange cover.  NW informed the meeting there had been no major issues identified on the report forms since the last meeting. Some minor issues raised had been resolved by the custody Sergeant. Low staffing issues had been raised again; this was being monitored. A small number of requests for Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) leaflets had been requested: we’ve since been advised an easy read leaflet was now available within custody.  NW advised the visitors when completing the visit report form, should more space be required they should use the line underneath or use the continuation sheet to ensure the details recorded were legible for processing.  NW informed the meeting that 10 near misses had been recorded from April 2023 to March 2024.  NW advised the meeting that the number of detainees accepting a visit over the last quarter stood at an average of 64% and waiting times for accessing the custody unit were between 5 and 15 minutes. NW asked the visitors to ensure access times into the actual visiting area were recorded on the visit form, this would be monitored as there appeared to be long delays.  NW reminded visitors to ensure all details were recorded on the visit report form in order to identify and follow up any trends. | **NW**  **All**  **Visitors** |
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| **6.** | **Disparity Scrutiny Panel Update** |  |
|  | LC informed the meeting the quarterly Disparity Scrutiny Panel was established over 18 months ago as recommended by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) with the premise of addressing racial disparity within custody.  The panel reviewed performance to identify where any disparity may lie across the custody system with the use of a performance report focussing on age, gender, ethnicity and whether there had been any disparity in relation to footfall, offence types, time in custody, strip search, use of force and remand. If there is disparity, the Force considered how it could be addressed. Dip sampling of records related to use of force in custody, strip searches and remands were also assessed to determine if they were proportionate and justified.  The Disparity Scrutiny Panel had representation from ICVs, the Force Independent Advisory Group, the legal department, Appropriate Adults (AAs), an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representative and internal officers, including from custody. LC thanked AH for attending the previous panel meeting.    LC asked what data the ICVs captured whilst carrying out a visit to establish if the data would assist with the disparity panels work. NW advised ICVs followed a checklist of rights and entitlements, with any issues identified on a visit form.  NW advised of the report forms received, the majority of detainees in custody appeared to be white between the age of 18-39, to which the ICVs agreed.  JM asked LC what the prosecution rates were and the disparity for people of ethnic heritage. LC confirmed there was a disparity in the number of ethnic heritage detainees in proportion to the population and the numbers presenting to custody.  LC informed the meeting several custody records were audited where a strip search had been conducted. As a result, it had been determined that a number of strip searches were not justified and required more sufficient detail around the grounds of the search. This was fed back to TD and would be included in the custody weekly newsletter.  LC advised the meeting that the monitoring of disparity formed part of the strategic equality plan to ensure the force was working towards becoming an anti-racist organisation and to identity any areas for improvement.  NW confirmed the premise of the scheme was to see all detainees who wished to accept a visit, but she would agree LCs request for ICVs to prioritise visits to those of ethnic heritage in addition to the vulnerable, under 18’s and women to assist with the disparity reports.  LC welcomed any other members to join the panel should they wish. |  |
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| **7.** | **Any Other Business** |  |
|  | AH informed the meeting that the Mental Health Practitioner located with the Force Control Room was interested in attending the next panel meeting to explain his role and how it’s utilised within custody. CH to forward invite for the meeting. | **CH** |
| **8.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, 29th January 2025.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 7:59pm**

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| **Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent**  I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.  The above request has my approval. |
| **Signature:** |
| **Date:**  **10.01.2025** |