

**MINUTES OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

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

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 26TH APRIL 2023**

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

Mr Richard Holland – Independent Custody Visitor (RH)

Mr Alan Heywood – Independent Custody Visitor (AH)

Also in attendance:

Mrs Nicola Warren - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (NW)

Mrs Ceri Davis - Assistant Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CD)

Inspector Martin Cawley – Custody Newport (MC)

***The meeting commenced at 6:11 p.m.***

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from Marilyn Rankin, Linda Mason, Michael Hallinan, David Binding, Lisa Langley, Chief Inspector Mark Thomas, Custody Nurse Louise Price and Ystrad Mynach Custody Inspector Andy Brunker. |  |
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| **2.** | **Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings** |  |
|  | The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.  A discussion was held around recording detainee ethnicity. The Home Office set the ethnicity options for recording the data, but it was suggested the data could be inaccurate should the detainee identify differently to presented.  NW advised us that the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) confirmed that ethnicity details should be obtained from the detainees but if visitors were not comfortable obtaining the information from the detainee, then the information could be taken from the detainee’s records as recorded by the Force.  NW informed us that the ICVA confirmed that visitors should record the ethnicity of the detainee as specified by the detainee and should never try to guess someone’s ethnicity, nor should it be questioned.    **Action 3**  MC to provide an update on the staff wellbeing and morale questionnaire results at our next meeting.  **Action 4**  MC to provide the near miss statistics to CD. |  |
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| **3.** | **Custody Update** |  |
|  | MC introduced himself as the new Inspector for the Newport Custody suite.  MC informed the visitors that there were vacancies within the department and long-term absence which had caused some staffing issues. Following a recruitment process a number of candidates had been shortlisted. The successful candidates would start in September once their training process had been completed. MC confirmed there was no pattern regarding the reasons for absence and advised that it was not related to their roles.  The visitors had noted that new members of staff were not fully aware of the ICV Scheme and what processes they followed in custody. MC advised the meeting that officers from the local policing areas had been providing cover and he would ensure they received the refresher training on the Independent Custody Visiting scheme.  MC informed the meeting that a peer support worker had been introduced into the custody unit, this had been welcomed and had been effective with the detainees. The support worker would be working with Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) and situated in the unit at all times.  MC advised the visitors that the Force had implemented support for Welsh speakers in custody with Welsh speaking officers attending to familiarise themselves with custody procedures should they be called to offer support to Welsh speaking detainees.  MC informed the visitors that the use of the TreadMatch device (a National Footwear Database (NFD) scanner for gathering footwear impressions during the detention process) had increased significantly over the past few months. The officer completes the process and then submits the pattern to the NFD.  These are automatically compared to the national collection to establish the type of pattern the footwear should be linked to. Once the pattern type is known, an intelligence pack is gathered to offer an immediate view for the investigator.  MC advised that some cells required updating following a Health and Safety inspection and this would be actioned as soon as possible. This mainly related to food being thrown around by detainees within the cells.  MC informed the meeting a scanning device had been installed to detect any metal objects that detainees could be in possession of when arriving in the custody unit.  MC informed the visitors there had been some issues with the CCTV cameras within custody with the screens only being active in one of the two monitoring areas. Also, one of the Live Scan cells was not working and in the short term an officer would be monitoring the cell until the problem was rectified.  MC advised the visitors that Operation Safeguard had started nationally. This involved using cells as accommodation for prisoners when the number of cells available in prisons becomes critically low. There were several cells dedicated to this within Ystrad Mynach custody unit.  NW confirmed that visitors had been advised to record on the visiting report form if a prisoner was being detained under Operation Safeguard but there had not been any recorded to date.  NW referred to recent issues in the media regarding strip searching juveniles and asked if there were any issues with strip searches in Gwent. MC informed the visitors that the number of juveniles that were strip searched within custody was very low and a very low number were held in custody overnight. When this was the case, the Inspector would review the custody logs to ensure the rationale was appropriate and correct processes had been followed. NW asked if there were specific cells for juveniles and MC confirmed that there were specific cells used for juvenile and vulnerable detainees in a segregated area and the booking process was carried out with no other detainees in the area.  MC informed the visitors that an audit was being carried out on strip searches within custody. This was to ensure the rationale, decision making and, when there was a change in care plan, that custody records were being updated.    MC informed the visitors that regular meetings with the local policing areas (LPA) to discuss adverse incidents, sharing of information and learning was to be reinstated.  NW asked what the protocol was in relation to removal of items in custody as a visitor had highlighted that a detainee had not had their laces removed. MC informed us that there had been a change in protocol from the College of Policing where detainees should be allowed their personal attire whilst in custody. A risk assessment would be undertaken to determine if ligatures should be removed. MC confirmed that a vulnerable detainee who was at risk of self-harm would be in a cell under permanent observation via CCTV or an officer present outside the cell.    This decision would be made based on a number of factors including a risk assessment, intelligence held for the detainee, information the detainee may have disclosed and the reason for detention.  JM gave feedback that a small number of detainees were not being kept updated whilst in custody and not being given access to make a phone call. MC confirmed that detainees did not have the right to a phone call but have the right to ensure someone is informed that they are in custody. In certain circumstances it was not appropriate for the detainee to make a phone call.  MC to raise this with the Training Officer to ensure officers have clarity on this and that was being clearly explained to the detainee. | **MC**  **MC** |
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| **4.** | **Scheme Update & Performance Framework Update** |  |
|  | NW advised us that there were seven active Visitors on the scheme. One visitor had decided to take short break until June and would resume visits in July. Visitors would continue to visit each custody unit on alternate weeks until the end of June.  NW informed the visitors that although visitor numbers had increased, a strategy was being prepared to assist the next recruitment phase with a view of reaching a wider audience to encourage more interest and to hopefully increase diversity on the scheme.  NW confirmed that the Commissioner had agreed to increase visitors’ tenure by a further three years to nine years in total and expressed his gratitude to the visitors for their continued support.  NW advised the visitors there were thirteen visits scheduled between January and March 2023 to Newport and Ystrad Mynach Custody units. Eleven visits took place, one visit was overlooked, and one form had not been received and we had been unable to locate a copy of it from Custody, so this visit had been recorded as missed.  NW advised that visiting across a random spread of times/days ensured that the custody unit is viewed across a range of demand scenarios. This was vital for visitors as it provided assurance that detainee welfare had been maintained, regardless of the level of demand in the unit. The Assistant Scheme Administrator was continuing to provide monthly visiting updates on the spread of visiting times to assist with ensuring there was an even spread of visits over different times of the day.  There had been a good spread of visits this quarter during weekdays but no weekend days, NW asked visitors to maintain a variety of times/days.  NW reminded the visitors they could scan and email the report forms to the Commissioner’s office, provided there was a paper copy left in the appropriate folder within the custody unit.Once received by the OPCC the image should be deleted from the device it was sent from and any other copies of the visit form should be destroyed/shredded. The copy must be legible to enable the OPCC to record matters fully.  NW asked that when visitors were aware that they would be on holiday or unable to make a visit that they were scheduled for, they liaise with other ICVs without delay to arrange cover for their scheduled visit. If visitors were unsuccessful in arranging cover, they should notify the Chair/OPCC as soon as possible in order to allow the Chair/OPCC adequate time to assist them in trying to organise cover.  NW informed the visitors that the Commissioner would like to attend a visit with an ICV and a member of the OPCC Communication and Engagement Team. NW to contact the Team to confirm a date.  NW advised the visitors that all of the custody issues raised by the visitors for the last quarter were dealt with immediately by the Custody Sergeant.  NW confirmed there had been no issues with accessing custody this quarter, however visitors advised that on occasion they were kept waiting in custody after being allowed entry. MC suggested having a notice on the wall within custody as a reminder of the process. NW to send MC the process.  NW asked ICVs to review the ‘An Introduction to Racism within Custody and Policing’ document circulated by the ICVA.  NW asked the visitors to ensure their ID cards were kept up to date. CD to check with the Vetting Department whether level two vetted individuals should have access to open the car park barriers  NW informed the visitors that the OPCC were working towards Sliver compliance level as part of the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework. | **All visitors**  **NW**  **NW**  **CD** |
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| **5.** | **Any Other Business** |  |
|  | At the meeting AH shared a template form that he had compiled that could be given to the custody officer for completion on arrival, which included the detainee cell numbers etc. It was agreed that it would be useful to introduce. AH to circulate to visitors. | **AH** |
| **6.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, 11th July 2023.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 7:25pm**

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| **Actions from Meeting dated 19th October 2022** | |  |  |  |
| **Minute Number** | **Action** | **Owner** | **Update** | **Complete/Ongoing** |
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| **3** | RG informed us that a staff wellbeing and morale questionnaire had been circulated to all custody staff. The questionnaire is anonymous and would be completed via a portal. MC to provide an update on the questionnaire feedback at the next meeting. | **MC** |  |  |
| **4** | HJ advised us he was the Health and Safety lead for the Criminal Justice and would send the figures to CD for recording. | **MC** |  |  |
|  | **Actions from Meeting dated 26th April 2023** |  |  |  |
| **3** | The visitors had noted that new members of staff were not fully aware of the ICV Scheme and what processes they followed in custody. MC advised the meeting that officers from the local policing areas had been providing cover and he would ensure they received the refresher training on the Independent Custody Visiting scheme. | **MC** |  |  |
| **3** | MC confirmed that detainees did not have the right to a phone call but have the right to ensure someone is informed that they are in custody. In certain circumstances it was not appropriate for the detainee to make a phone call.  MC to raise this with the Training Officer to ensure officers have clarity on this and that was being clearly explained to the detainee. | **MC** |  |  |
| **4** | NW advised that visiting across a random spread of times/days ensured that the custody unit is viewed across a range of demand scenarios. This was vital for visitors as it provided assurance that detainee welfare had been maintained, regardless of the level of demand in the unit. The Assistant Scheme Administrator was continuing to provide monthly visiting updates on the spread of visiting times to assist with ensuring there was an even spread of visits over different times of the day.  There had been a good spread of visits this quarter during weekdays but no weekend days, NW asked visitors to maintain a variety of times/days. | **All visitors** |  |  |
| **4** | NW asked ICVs to review the ‘An Introduction to Racism within Custody and Policing’ document circulated by the ICVA. | **All visitors** |  |  |
| **4** | NW asked the visitors to ensure their ID cards were kept up to date. CD to check with the Vetting Department whether level two vetted individuals should have access to open the car park barriers | **CD** | Vetting confirmed level two vetted should have access. Visitors advised to try when next in Headquarters. | **Complete** |
| **5** | At the meeting AH shared a template form that he had compiled that could be given to the custody officer for completion on arrival, which included the detainee cell numbers etc. It was agreed that it would be useful to introduce. AH to circulate to visitors. | **AH** | A copy of the form has been put in the ICV folder with visit forms at Newport. I will leave some forms at Ystrad Mynach on the next visit. When used in Newport the custody staff have meet us with completed form. Feedback from Custody staff was it’s good for them as they know what we need. | **Complete** |