Decision log: PCCG-2023-023



**MINUTES OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

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

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 23RD OCTOBER 2023**

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

Mr Richard Holland – Independent Custody Visitor (RH)

Mr Alan Heywood – Independent Custody Visitor (AH)

Ms Lisa Langley - Independent Custody Visitor (LM)

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 6:10 p.m.***

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from Marilyn Rankin, David Binding, Michael Hallinan, Linda Mason, 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. |  |
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| **3.** | **Custody Update** |  |
|  | MC confirmed there was only one custody unit open which was Newport and there was a trial planned to open Ystrad Mynach custody unit in four weeks’ time and to close Newport. A decision would then be made which unit would close indefinitely. MC to advise NW and CD of the exact date of the unit closure.  MC advised the visitors that temporary cells would be used and located in the carpark area of Ystrad Mynach custody unit to increase capacity.  MC clarified that Newport custody unit could be used for Operation Safeguard which was a scheme that allowed prisoners to be held in cells within custody units when prisons were at full capacity. MC informed the meeting a small number of prisoners had been held in custody following Operation Safeguard.  MC informed the visitors that staffing levels were increasing, with six Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) having completed their training. CDO levels would be back up to establishment with five CDOs on each shift, this would alleviate concerns over officer welfare regarding overtime requirements.  MC advised the meeting seven applicants had been successful for the role of CDO following a recruitment process, it was expected that five officers would be operational in the coming months and two would start later in the year. Another Custody  course was expected to take place at the beginning of the year to provide resilience within the unit.  MC informed the visitors that a Performance Matrix and Framework had been developed to focus on children in custody to ensure investigations were being progressed effectively. The Matrix would monitor children in police custody with the process being reviewed for any child that had been in custody over 10 – 14 hours as well as reviewing the circumstances relating to the decision to refuse detention for a child. As part of the process, the use of Appropriate Adults (AAs) would also be scrutinised.  The average wait times for booking in detainees would be reviewed to ensure the process was as efficient as it could be and to reduce the number of detainees waiting to be booked in at any one time.  MC advised the visitors all CDOs would be trained and refreshed on the process for booking in detainees, this would provide additional support for booking in at busy periods. MC to share the Performance Matrix Framework with NW each month.  NW asked if the red phone line at the front desk in Newport went directly into the custody unit. MC confirmed the visitors could use the phone line which would ring directly into the custody area if they had difficulty accessing custody.  MC informed the meeting an Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Board would be displayed within the custody unit and would contain guidance on the ICV process, the visit report form from the previous visit and any relevant updates. | **MC**  **MC** |
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| **4.** | **Scheme Update & Performance Framework Update** |  |
|  | NW informed the visitors that Marilyn Rankin had taken the decision to resign from the scheme as she could not commit the time required to the scheme. We wished her all the best for the future and thanked her for her support during her time on the scheme.  NW thanked the Vice Chair, David Binding, for assisting with the ICV interviews during the recruitment process. NW informed the visitors there were seven applicants, six applicants attended an interview and five were successful. They would join the scheme subject to vetting clearance. JM offered to attend the induction process to provide ICV input which NW accepted. Once the induction training had taken place, NW would circulate some potential dates for the annual refresher training session and advised this would be a good opportunity for new members to meet existing members.  NW advised the meeting there were thirteen visits scheduled between July and September. Eleven visits took place, one visit was aborted because access was delayed, and one visit form was outstanding.  NW reiterated that visiting across a random spread of times and days ensured that we saw the custody unit across a range of demand scenarios. The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) has advised that they would be benchmarking visits in the future to ascertain if weekend visits were taking place.  NW advised the meeting there had been a visit form received with a page missing. MC to check the custody folder for a copy and send to CD.  NW reminded the visitors to ensure their ID cards were kept up to date and to ensure the cards were worn when carrying out a visit.  NW informed the visitors that all the custody issues raised by the visitors for the last quarter were dealt with immediately by the Custody Sergeant. However, an issue was raised with the OPCC regarding a delay in gaining entry into the custody unit. The decision was taken to abort the visit because the visitors were not given access. NW advised the Code of Practice and Handbook stated ICVs should be admitted immediately unless there was a risk to their safety, and they should be given a reason for the wait. The Inspector was asked to reiterate the importance of the scheme to the custody staff and that it was a statutory function. A copy of the ICV handbook, and the code of practice was also provided for circulation to custody staff by NW upon notification of the issue. An issue was also raised in relation to a detainee complaining of being assaulted by an officer whilst moving from a police vehicle to the custody unit.  NW contacted the Inspector to ensure the relevant checks were made including the provision of medical assistance for the detainee. The Inspector reviewed the CCTV footage of the alleged incident and provided an update to NW. Following review of the footage, the Inspector confirmed the alleged assault had not taken place. The complaints process was still open to the detainee should they wish to submit a complaint to the Professional Standards Department.  NW confirmed the process should this issue arise again was to ensure the detainee had received medical assistance, they had been advised of the complaints process and that the CCTV footage of the incident was to be viewed by the Inspector and an update provided to NW. Details should be recorded on the visit report form to enable NW to follow up or, if it was an urgent case, to email the details to NW.  NW advised the meeting there was still an issue with obtaining the number of near misses from the Force. The number that had been provided appeared to be higher than expected. This could be as a result of the adverse incidents being included in the number provided. Other OPCCs had been contacted to provide a comparison which had shown the number of near misses they had recorded to be much lower.  MC advised the visitors that a near miss and an adverse incident were not the same. MC clarified that a near miss was when an item on a detainee was missed during a search or a detainee had taken something into the cell which could have been a significant risk. An adverse incident was where any incident if left unchecked could have resulted in serious harm or death.  NW informed the visitors that the number of detainees accepting visits over the last quarter was an average of 67%.  NW asked the visitors to take the time to watch the ICVA Bitesize training resources contained within the ICVA weekly newsletters including the new resource observations-reviews-and arousals.  NW informed the visitors the OPCC had submitted evidence for the Quality Assurance Framework 2 assessment and hoped to achieve silver compliance. Previously we had achieved code compliant.  NW reiterated that there was a requirement to attend a minimum of one panel meeting a year either in person or online. NW had updated the ICV handbook and following sign off will circulate to all visitors.  NW asked the visitors to note that was no consistency across Forces in relation to additional considerations for detained females experiencing the menopause, or how Forces actively identify any vulnerabilities linked to menopausal symptoms. A recommendation had been made to all Forces to liaise directly with their healthcare providers to ensure that they were able to provide specific care plans for detainees affected by menopause.  It had been recommended that Forces should purchase menopause hygiene items and offer a package of items to female detainees. The hygiene packs were not available yet regionally. | **NW**  **MC**  **MC**  **All ICVs**  **NW** |
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| **5.** | **Any Other Business** |  |
|  | An issue was raised following a visit where an officer was not very helpful when approached by an ICV. MC apologised to the visitor and assured us he would address the issue to ensure this would not happen again.  NW advised the visitors should the issue occur again; this should be recorded on the visit report form to be followed up with the Inspector.  AH asked if officers had received training on producing the relevant details required by ICVs for review from the custody record as each Sergeant obtained the details differently. MC confirmed that officers did receive training for this. MC to discuss with the trainer a process to ensure all Sergeants were proving the details in the same format.  NW requested clarity on Appropriate Adults (AAs) service provision regarding timeliness of their attendance. MC confirmed the force have no say on where the AAs travel from. This was being reviewed in order to hold the service provision and the custody sergeant to account to ensure the detention of the detainee was not prolonged as a result.  A discussion ensued regarding the percentage of visitors that should be seen if the custody cells were full. NW provided clarity that if there was a large number of detainees in custody the process would be to visit the vulnerable and any minors as a priority and then a random selection of detainees. Should a large number of detainees be asleep or incapacitated then to view a number of custody records. | **MC** |
| **6.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, 31st January 2024.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 7:02pm**

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| **Jeff Cuthbert B.SC., MCIPD, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent** | |
| I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with my code of conduct.  Any such interests are recorded below.  The above decision log has my approval.  Please note: This report has been signed by the CEx on behalf of the PCC as per Part 3c, Scheme of Consent and Delegation, Paragraph 9 of the Manual of Corporate Governance. | |
| Signed | Date  10.01.2024 |

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| **Contact Officer** |  |
| Name | Nicola Warren |
| Position | Governance officer |
| Telephone | 01633 642200 |
| Email | Nicola.Warren@gwent.police.uk |
| **Background papers** |  |

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| **Actions from meeting 23rd October 2023** | |  |  |  |
| **Minute Number** | **Action** | **Owner** | **Update** | **Complete/Ongoing** |
| **3.** | A decision would then be made which unit would open indefinitely. MC to advise NW and CD exact date of unit closure. | **MC** |  |  |
| **3.** | MC advised the visitors all CDOs would be trained and refreshed on the process for booking in detainees, this would provide additional support for booking in at busy periods. MC to share Performance Matrix Framework with NW each month. | **MC** |  |  |
| **4.** | Once the induction training had taken place, NW would circulate some potential dates for the annual refresher training session and advised this would be a good opportunity for new members to meet existing members. | **NW** |  |  |
| **4.** | NW advised the meeting there had been a visit form received with a page missing. MC to check the custody folder for a copy and send to CD. | **MC** |  |  |
| **4.** | NW asked the visitors to take the time to watch the ICVA Bitesize training resources contained within the ICVA weekly newsletters including the new resource observations-reviews-and arousals. | **All ICVs** |  |  |
| **4.** | NW reiterated that there was a requirement to attend a minimum of one panel meeting a year either in person or online. NW had updated the ICV handbook and following sign off will circulate to all visitors. | **NW** |  |  |
| **5.** | MC confirmed that officers did receive training for this. MC to discuss with the trainer a process to ensure all Sergeants were proving the details in the same format. | **MC** |  |  |
|  | **Actions from Meeting dated 11th July 2023** |  |  |  |
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| **6** | MC to advise the OPCC of any planned closures in the future. | **MC** |  | **Ongoing** |
| **6** | NW asked the visitors if they could monitor the level of time it takes for an Appropriate Adult (AA) to attend for juveniles and vulnerable adults. AAs should attend when practicable. | **All ICVs** |  | **Ongoing** |