

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2016-050

OFFICE OF THE POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS
HELD AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG, CWMBRAN
ON 25TH FEBRUARY 2016**

Present: Mr Justin Johnstone (Chair)
Mr Brian Thomas
Mr Arthur Elliott
Mr Brian Williams
Mr Richard Holland
Ms Jean Munton
Mr David Binding
Ms Haylie Griffith
Ms Ruth Coulthard
Ms Julie Morgan

Also in attendance:

Mrs Maria Chapman (Scheme Administrator)
Miss Jessica Tippins (Assistant Scheme Administrator)
Inspector Micah Hassell (Newport Custody Inspector)

The meeting commenced at 3.03 p.m.

Action

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies were received from Inspector Mark Smith, Ms Eleanor Weare, Ms Lesley Ball and Mr Stephen Spokes.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2015

2. The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.

Brian Thomas (BT) asked whether Mr John Thomas had been sent a letter of thanks following his retirement from the scheme. Maria Chapman (MC) confirmed that a letter had been sent from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

CUSTODY UPDATE

3. Inspector Micah Hassell (MH) provided the group with the custody update.

We were informed that although demand on the custody units

had fallen in the past year, risk had increased. This was as a direct result of the increase of detainees entering the units with mental health issues. MH made the group aware that further work was needed with partners before this issue would be addressed. MC asked whether any working groups had been created since the signing of the Mental Health Concordat. MH confirmed that there were groups but that no changes had been made to front line services as of yet.

We were made aware that a number of training sessions were being held with front line custody staff in areas surrounding mental health including the areas of Asperger's and Autism.

Jean Munton (JM) asked MH to clarify whether detainees from the Newport custody suite were being transported to the Ystrad Mynach suite in order to be medically assessed. MH confirmed that this was the case but that the practise now was that if a Nurse or Doctor was not available at Newport, detainees were taken to the local Accident and Emergency. He did confirm however that this would be reviewed by the force with the view to change in the future. MH reassured the group that the force were carrying out their work effectively and were managing the risk.

Arthur Elliott (AE) asked MH whether the nurse triage was still in place. MH confirmed that this provision was still in place but that it was having little effect on the numbers entering custody with mental health issues.

MH provided the group with an update regarding juveniles in custody. He confirmed that work was on-going between forces and the Welsh Assembly Government to improve post-charge accommodation for juveniles.

We were then informed that a thorough review of the storage of religious items was taking place in both custody suites. Custody staff would also receive training on how to manage a variety of religious needs.

MH confirmed that he had visited the Suffolk force to see how Gwent could improve services, accountability, etc. He expressed his happiness at how this area of work was progressing.

MH was pleased to confirm a drop in both 'near misses' and 'out of commission' cells at the Newport custody suite. He stated that although his staff faced a number of challenges they were managing them well.

We were made aware that MH would be visiting the Kent

police force in the near future to review the 'virtual courts' process. This process would mean that detainees would appear in court via video link from the custody unit. We were informed of two potential risks arising from this. The first being that juveniles could be detained for longer, possibly overnight. The second was that there could be issues regarding capacity at the custody units. AE asked MH whether regular checks would still be carried out if this was to take place. MH confirmed that regular safer detention checks would still take place.

An issue was raised regarding the length of time it was taking ICVs to access the Newport custody suite. MH made the group aware that building and fire regulations at the Newport custody suite meant that all visitors to the building had to sign in and out of the building. He reassured the group that the front desk had been informed to prioritise ICVs. MH also reminded the group that he could not allow ICVs to be admitted entrance to the custody suite until he knew the area was safe. One visitor identified that ICVs should, as stated in Home Office guidance, be granted entry into the custody suite within five minutes. MH stated that he was not aware of this and asked MC for a copy of the ICV Handbook for his information. MH assured the group that he and his staff fully appreciated the role of the ICVs and tried to grant them access into the suite as soon as was practically possible. He did however ask the ICVs for patience. It was raised that often, the issue was that visitors were not being informed why they were being delayed. MH agreed that this was unacceptable and assured the group that he would raise this issue with the staff at Newport. AE made the group aware of the figures within the scheme update. During the last 25 visits, 18 had been granted access in under five minutes.

MC

MH

A final issue was raised with MH regarding a lack of reporting forms at the Newport custody suite. MH confirmed that forms were available at the unit and asked that if any visitor were having trouble locating the forms, to ask a member of staff who would assist.

SCHEME UPDATE

4. MC provided the Scheme Update. She confirmed to the group that most of the issues within the update had been addressed by MH in the Custody Update.

All visitors were asked again to ensure that they write clearly on all report forms handed in. MH asked MC whether the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had considered switching to electronic forms. MC confirmed that

she had raised the suggestion with the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) but that this was not possible at present due to financial restrictions. One visitor asked whether the forms could be completed electronically on personal devices. MC made the group aware that because all reports were confidential, this was not allowed. The group were informed that a new form had been designed by the OPCC. MC confirmed she would be arranging a task and finish group before the next meeting to review this new form. Those interested in being involved in this task and finish group were noted.

MC

MC updated the group on her meeting with the Head of Criminal Justice. Some of the data included on the current performance framework was not available. MC had therefore also redesigned the performance framework to include the data which was available.

We were informed that the guidance regarding buzzers had changed again and that all forces were now advised to install intercom systems. AE raised that checking intercoms during every visit could become tiresome for front desk staff. MC agreed and assured the group that this was being looked into further at a strategic level.

MC asked the group for their opinion as to why the number of detainees accepting visits had declined so sharply during December and January. One visitor suggested that the detainees may have been sleeping as these are not recorded as visits. MC confirmed that there would be a section added to the new reporting form to record this information. It was also suggested that detainees who are introduced to the ICVs via the custody staff are less likely to accept a visit. MC asked MH to remind his custody staff that ICV's are to introduce themselves.

MH

It was raised that there was very little value in carrying out a visit after 8pm because many of the detainees would be asleep. MC confirmed that the post 8pm visits are in place to ensure the suites are visited during a variety of times. BW made the group aware that the most valuable visit he had carried out was on a weekend morning.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

5. We noted the updated information within the performance framework.

MC informed the group that the new performance framework would be implemented from the 1st April 2016 and would not

contain retrospective operational data.

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITOR ASSOCIATION'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2016

6. The group acknowledged the notes from the ICVA national conference. MC brought to the groups attention page six of the notes which provided a relevant checklist for ICVs to consider during their visits.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS OF THE EASTERN REGION TRANSLATION SHEETS FOR INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITOR

7. We noted the translation sheets produced by the Eastern regions. MC confirmed that although Gwent had no plans to produce a more localised version, this was a useful resource for the ICVs to keep.


ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8. AE reminded all ICVs to check the bells when they carry out their visits. MH confirmed that these should be checked by custody staff following a handover. Confirmation of this would be recorded and available for ICVs in each custody suite. He asked visitors to challenge custody staff if it was noted that these checks had not taken place within a few hours of handovers taking place.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9. The next meeting has been scheduled for **3pm** on the **26th May 2016** in **Conference Room 1** at **Gwent Police Headquarters, Croesyceiliog**.

Meeting concluded at 4.25pm.

Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	
I have monitored the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.	
Signed 	Date 7/7/16

Contact Officer	
Name	Siân Curley
Position	Chief of Staff
Telephone	01633 642200
Email	Sian.Curley@gwent.pcc.police.uk

Background papers	None
-------------------	------