



**MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME
HELD BOTH REMOTELY ON TEAMS AND IN PERSON IN HAWTHORN MEETING
ROOM,
POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 1ST JULY 2026**

Present: Linda Mason - Independent Custody Visitor (LM)
Michael O'Farrell - Independent Custody Visitor (MO)
Andrea Williams - Independent Custody Visitor (AW)
Alex Robinson - Independent Custody Visitor (AR)

Also in attendance:

Nicola Warren – Scheme Manager, OPCC (NW)
Ceri Hiscox - Scheme Administrator OPCC (CH)
Jeff Richards – Contract Management Specialist – Custody (JR)

The meeting commenced at 6:15pm

	Notes and Actions	Action
1.	Apologies	
	Apologies for absence were received from R Holland and Inspector Akbar Ali.	
2.	Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings	
	The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
3.	Contract Management Specialist – Custody	

	JR introduced himself to the members and opened the discussion by explaining that the organisation operated a joint commercial and procurement service across two forces, with two distinct roles. He stated that the procurement function supported colleagues in sourcing goods and services, particularly where the value exceeded £12,500, which was the relevant threshold. JR advised that contracts were categorised according to value and importance. He referred to the Healthcare Professionals (Mitie contract) as one of the most expensive contracts held by Gwent. He noted that, due to the significant level of public money involved, gold contracts received considerable attention. JR explained that contracts were categorised by value and criticality. Gold contracts covered high-value and critical services such as estates, ICT, vehicles and custody healthcare provided by Mitie. Silver contracts included services such as food provision, interpretation services and appropriate adults, while bronze contracts related to lower-value purchases that required minimal oversight unless issues arose. JR advised that around four staff members managed these contracts. Having initially joined South Wales Police 18 months earlier in a South Wales-only role, his position became a joint role six months ago, giving him responsibility for both South Wales and Gwent contracts. JR stated that his team meets monthly with Mitie to undertake formal contract reviews and monitor KPI performance. He reported that concerns around staffing levels had improved, with Mitie achieving 100% against the relevant KPIs over the previous two months. These measures assessed staff shift coverage and the timeliness of detainee assessments relating to fitness to detain and fitness to release. JR advised that Mitie employed 12 full-time Healthcare Professionals (HCPs), primarily qualified nurses and paramedics, supported by a contract manager and a full-time clinical lead covering both South Wales and Gwent. The service also included five senior staff shared across both forces, always ensuring senior cover. JW explained that Mitie operated an out-of-hours on-call system, including access to an on-call director and GP support for serious clinical matters. HCPs were expected to respond to most callouts within one hour and attended hospitals, detainee assessments, and community deaths where required. Mitie's performance was monitored against 10 KPIs, with results reported monthly and retained for scrutiny should any service concerns arise.	
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JR explained that his team scrutinised the contract by reviewing complaints, access records and CCTV where required. He noted that Mitie operated within a highly regulated environment and that contract management involved addressing operational issues, complaints, escalations and contract interpretation. He supported custody colleagues who had day-to-day contact with Mitie through monthly reviews and weekly team meetings. He considered the contract to be well managed, although he acknowledged that contract oversight had been insufficient around a year earlier due to limited management time. He advised that arrangements in South Wales were similar, with four custody suites compared to two in Gwent. In Gwent, healthcare provision was primarily based at Ystrad Mynach, supported by two full-time HCPs, with one redeployed to Newport when that custody suite was operational. JR explained that healthcare cover was managed jointly across Gwent and South Wales Police, with staff moved between custody suites when operationally required. For example, a healthcare professional (HCP) from Ystrad Mynach could be redeployed to cover a busier suite in Bridgend, while Gwent retained cover through the remaining HCP and a senior clinician. JR advised that any reduction in cover would be monitored through contractual performance measures, with failures reported and discussed. Staff movements were sometimes directed by the police and would typically be agreed between the relevant operational leads at bronze level. He noted that the bronze Inspector usually held responsibility for custody matters, although in South Wales this was a dedicated custody role. JR confirmed that custody healthcare rooms should be locked when not in use. He noted that secure drug storage cupboards within these rooms were tightly controlled, with all access and use recorded. While a degree of pragmatism was sometimes applied during brief absences, sensitive rooms should generally remain secured. Members raised ongoing concerns about staffing levels within custody suites, noting that Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) consistently reported staff shortages during visits. Concerns were expressed that significant administrative demands, such as arranging prisoner transport and solicitors, reduced the number of staff available for frontline duties. This was seen as potentially creating	
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	operational risks, particularly if an incident occurred while staffing numbers were already reduced due to leave or absences. Members acknowledged that custody staff responded promptly to visitors despite reported staffing pressures. JR advised that staffing levels were not within his remit but noted that a significant recruitment campaign for Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) was underway and new recruits were currently in training. JR explained that Mitie's performance was monitored through weekly team meetings and formal monthly governance meetings attended by senior police and Mitie representatives. He stated that healthcare professionals and senior Mitie managers, including clinical and governance leads, were involved in the review process to ensure effective oversight. JR considered the contract to receive strong corporate attention and noted that Mitie was the UK's largest provider of custody healthcare services, supporting around 24 police forces. JR was asked about reports that detained persons (DPs) had not been provided with blankets overnight due to a lack of stock. JR acknowledged that blanket shortages were an ongoing issue and noted that Inspector Richard Dawe was leading work to address the problem. He explained that part of the challenge related to the laundry process, which required Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) to count blankets before they were sent to for cleaning. Blankets operated on a scheduled collection and return cycle, with items generally expected to be returned on the second delivery following collection. JR explained that the blanket shortage issue was partly caused by poor tracking of blankets sent for laundering. He stated that blankets must be counted before collection and recorded on paperwork provided, as it is otherwise impossible to verify that the correct number has been returned. He advised that Inspector Dawe had strengthened the documentation process, which appeared to be improving the situation, although pressures on CDOs and blankets being removed from use due to contamination or poor condition also contributed to shortages. He noted that similar issues had occurred in South Wales, where staff had been reminded that blanket counting was a mandatory requirement. Various solutions, including weighing blankets and using cameras, had been considered.	
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Blankets were transported in hampers holding six to eight items, washed and dried by the supplier and then counted before being returned to the custody suites. JR advised that introducing a barcode system for blankets was being considered to improve stock tracking, allowing each item to be scanned and monitored throughout the laundry process. However, this had not yet been implemented, and the current hamper-based system only provided approximate stock counts, increasing the risk of shortages. Members expressed concern that detainees had been left without blankets and stressed that this was unacceptable, particularly during winter months. They questioned whether lessons could be learned from other police forces and suggested that increasing the number of blankets available might help mitigate shortages, recognising that some blankets were removed from circulation due to contamination or damage. JR explained that blanket laundering was provided through a shared three-force contract covering Gwent, South Wales and Dyfed-Powys. While the contract offered good value, concerns remained about the five-day turnaround time and the reliability of the service. He noted that Dyfed-Powys was considering alternative arrangements, partly due to sustainability concerns associated with transporting laundry across South Wales. JR acknowledged that purchasing additional blankets could help address shortages and welcomed feedback where detainees were reported to be without them, particularly ahead of winter. Members noted that blanket availability appeared to have improved recently but remained concerned that detainees could be left inadequately supplied during colder periods. It was also recognised that blankets were often used as pillows as well as bedding, increasing demand. While custody bedding needed to be robust and safe, members observed that the thin blankets available might be insufficient on cold winter nights, especially where only a limited number were issued. JR explained that blanket-counting procedures had previously not been followed consistently, prompting a renewed focus on compliance. Blankets are now counted before collection, records are monitored on a shift-by-shift basis, and completion of the required paperwork is enforced. JR advised that, in South Wales, laundry bags would not be collected unless the documentation had been completed, helping to improve	
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	accountability. However, he was unable to comment on whether a specific Custody Detention Officer was responsible for the process, as this was an operational matter outside his role. Members stated that replacement clothing was normally well stocked and that they had not heard complaints in relation to it. Sanitary products were also discussed, with members noting that these were generally available in good quantities and appeared to be of a good quality. A discussion was held regarding the provision of Appropriate Adults for children detained overnight. JR advised that the current service did not provide Appropriate Adults for children in that capacity, although the issue had been raised through the tri-force "Reachable Moments" service and would be considered further at contract review meetings. NW stated that she had previously suggested Adferiad could provide the Appropriate Adult service to help prevent children being held in custody overnight, particularly as only one social worker was available on call overnight. She advised that Social Services had previously indicated they were not supportive of this approach, as Adferiad staff would not be trained to the same level as social workers. JR explained that legal responsibility for providing Appropriate Adults for children generally rested with local authorities, while police funding covered Appropriate Adult provision for adults aged 18 and over. Any proposal for the police to provide the service for children would therefore require further discussion with councils regarding funding and responsibility. Members noted that children can remain in custody overnight because of the lack of suitable secure accommodation and challenges in arranging placements, highlighting this as an ongoing issue where social services provision is limited. Members noted that custody food was plentiful and generally smelled good, although it was largely ultra-processed. Views from detainees varied, with some disliking the meals and others requesting multiple meals. JR advised that the food contract was due to go back out to market, with an extension currently in place with Bidfood under a national police contract. The Chair invited any final questions for JR. Members thanked him for attending and explaining the contract arrangements, noting that they felt their concerns had been listened to before the meeting moved on.	
4.	Chair and Vice Chair Nominations	
	Members agreed to proceed with the item despite only four members being present. LM was nominated and appointed as Chair. MO was	

	nominated for Vice Chair, accepted the nomination, and was supported by members present.	
5.	Custody Update	
	To be circulated following the meeting.	
6.	Scheme Update and Performance Framework Update	
	Members discussed arrangements for attending officer safety training, including location and parking, and noted the value of observing use-of-force and restraint training to better understand custody practices. NW suggested that members could attend future sessions, possibly alongside new recruits. Members queried whether each hot meal should be temperature checked individually or on a random basis and agreed that clarification should be sought on the correct requirements. NW agreed that ICVA guidance and any national guidance or issues would be reviewed. Members noted that the format of the temperature recording book may be misleading if checks are not required twice daily. The fridge temperature book was also discussed, with members agreeing that the fridge should remain at the correct temperature regardless of its usual contents, as different items may be stored there in future. Members discussed HCP staffing levels and agreed it would be useful to understand how often Gwent is affected by HCPs being redeployed across forces. It was noted that staffing had appeared to improve during recent visits, with two or three HCPs observed on some occasions. It was also agreed that further officer safety training dates would be circulated once logistics were confirmed. NW confirmed that recruitment had been completed, with four applicants interviewed and considered positive additions to the team. Members were advised that ICVA guidance covers training requirements and that the new training portal would support induction, with members now registered and able to receive induction training as a refresher. NW informed the meeting that there was 14 scheduled visits April to June and from the forms received to date, the Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) completed 9 visits, and they were awaiting 1 visit form from May and 4 from June. NW confirmed there had been a good variety of visit times and days which helped us to observe the custody unit under different levels of	NW

	demand, which is important for ensuring that detainee welfare is consistently maintained. NW informed the meeting that custody training had been delivered and attended by LM and MO. They considered it helpful that experienced CDOs and Sgts were involved, as this supported understanding of the ICV role. NW reiterated the importance of ensuring the custody ICV report contained only appropriate information, they should not see the name or alleged offence or medical history and should avoid discussing offence details unless the detainee raised them. NW reiterated that the ICV role was to check that the detainees understood why they were in custody and were safe and treated properly. NW discussed safe positioning when speaking with detainees, agreeing that visitors should maintain an appropriate distance. NW informed the meeting that visit access times were reported as good, with no waits over 15 minutes and most access being prompt. Members also welcomed the availability of a room for ICVs and solicitors within the custody area. NW referred to the level of detail recorded in the comments section of visit forms, noting that comments should be clear, legible and specific. It was clarified that the information informed the performance framework, so any detainee issues, requests or concerns should be recorded accurately, including where visitors had asked custody staff to address them. However, it was acknowledged that visitors may not always be able to confirm whether actions had been completed.	
7.	Any Other Business	
	No other business discussed.	
8.	Date of Next Meeting	
	The next meeting will be held at 6pm, 28th October 2026	

Jane Mudd Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

My decision is as I have recorded in this paper

Signed

Date



07/09/2026

Contact Officer

Name

Position

Telephone

Email

Background papers

Nicola Warren

Senior Governance Officer and Volunteer Lead

01633 642200

Nicola.Warren@gwent.police.uk

