Decision log number: PCCG-2025-012



**MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

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

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 30TH APRIL 2025**

**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)

Mike O’Farrell - Independent Custody Visitor (MO)

David Salmon - Independent Custody Visitor (DS)

Richard Holland - Independent Custody Visitor (RH)

Also in attendance:

Nicola Warren – Scheme Manager, OPCC (NW)

Ceri Hiscox - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CH)

Inspector Richard Dawe – Custody Ystrad (RD)

Angelika Pastuszko – Adferiad Appropriate Adult Services Manager (AP)

***The meeting commenced at 6:03pm.***

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from A Williams, A Robinson and  L Langley. |  |
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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 3**  RD provided an update on the lighting and heating issues within the custody unit. There is dimmable lighting in each cell and the desk areas, but not in the corridors. Although detainees would not spend any significant time in the corridor area, they needed to be sufficiently lit to observe the detainees and in the event of any disorder.  RD informed the meeting that the air conditioning was being replaced imminently which should resolve the heating issues. The unit would be closed and detainees moved to Newport Custody when the replacement begins.  RD advised that Newport was used as an overflow unit on a recent Sunday due to high demand. This was because there were no courts open on Sunday, leading to a buildup of detainees from Friday and Saturday.  RD informed the meeting the key dates which were pre-planned for Newport unit being utlilised as an overflow was Black Friday the last Friday before Christmas and New Years Eve. There were no plans to open on any other dates unless needed for pre-planned maintenance reasons. The unit would operate as an overflow contingency led by demand when required.  NW asked RD to ensure the OPCC was informed should Newport unit be open for longer periods of time to ensure the visitors conducted visits to the unit.  **Action 4**  NW informed the meeting that the near miss information was still outstanding but had been requested. |  |
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| **3.** | **Custody Update** |  |
|  | RD informed the meeting it had been identified that there were gaps when cell checks were being completed which should be conducted daily, with Sergeant checks completed weekly and Inspector checks completed monthly. The checking process required a significant amount of paperwork which was time consuming but also resource intensive. A new system had been implemented where the checks were conducted electronically on officers’ devices. The new system would streamline the process, reduce the reliance on physical paper, make workflow more efficient overall, identify any issues and ensure the checks were completed daily.  RD advised the meeting that the custody unit now had four custody Inspectors, which had allowed for a more proactive approach to custody management. They work closely with the resourcing department to ensure adequate staffing levels, which had improved waiting times, detainee and staff safety.  Staffing levels were discussed daily during departmental meetings, and they look a week in advance. Each Inspector was expected to plan three months in advance to ensure adequate staffing.  RD informed the meeting that the feedback on the Appropriate Adult (AA) service provided by Adferiad was positive. However, there were still issues with waiting times when requesting an AA for juveniles from Social Services out of hours. This increased the length of time spent in custody for the juvenile. NW suggested these waiting times should be recorded in the same way that requests for secure accommodation were recorded in order to evidence the lack of provision and how this affected detention times for juveniles.  AP informed the meeting Adferiad had made a proposal to many Police Forces (but not yet received a response) to offer emergency support by providing overflow cover for social services or night cover. Their team would be available within an hour, which was faster than the current response time from social services. AP advised that staff require training prior to agreement.  RD advised the meeting that Social Services had an obligation to provide the provision and suggested a three-way conversation with social services to address the issue. This conversation would involve the police, AP’s team, and social services.  RD provided an update on the health care provision. The role was staffed regularly, there had been instances where only one nurse was working instead of the contracted two. In February, 84% of shifts were covered with two nurses and in March this had decreased to 69.4% of shifts. This had led to some delays in detainees being processed but assured the meeting that the health care practitioners (HCPs) prioritise their tasks accordingly to ensure there was no heightened risk to detainees and that steps were being taken to resolve the staffing issue. Data recorded for nurse requests attended stood at around 90%.  RD informed the meeting that the HCP provider was working to meet their contractual obligations and improve staffing levels and had been assured there would be an improvement.  RD shared positive impressions of the revamped custody unit, highlighting the improved environment for detainees and users, the separate booking area for juveniles, and the new model of working with more Custody Sergeants with more specific roles and increased Custody Detention Officer (CDO) numbers.  MH asked if risk assessments were carried out by competent individuals.  RD advised the meeting that the daily risk assessment checks were conducted by CDOs, who use an electronic form on their mobile devices to log issues and ensure compliance. Sergeants were responsible for conducting weekly checks, which include more detailed assessments of the custody unit's conditions and provisions. Inspectors conduct monthly checks, focusing on estate-level issues and the functionality of the suite and they address any significant problems that arise. A comprehensive risk assessment is conducted every six months by the Chief Inspector in conjunction with the estates department. This assessment ensures that all safety standards are met.  RD confirmed that individuals conducting risk assessments in the custody unit were deemed competent according to health and safety legislation and the checks were recorded on an electronic form on the CDOs mobile devices to log issues and ensure compliance. |  |
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| **4.** | **Appropriate Adult - Vulnerability Presentation** |  |
|  | AP introduced herself as the Appropriate Adult Manager for service provider Adferiad.  AP provided a presentation on the role of Appropriate Adults and the importance of vulnerability assessments. She discussed the challenges in identifying vulnerability and the need for ongoing assessment to ensure detainees receive the appropriate support.  **Role of Appropriate Adults:** AP explained the role of Appropriate Adults was advising detained persons, observing interviews, and facilitating communication. They ensure that the detainee's rights and entitlements are protected.  **Challenges in Identification:** AP discussed the challenges in identifying vulnerability, noting that it was often subjective and depended on the sergeant's assessment. She emphasised the importance of ongoing assessment to ensure detainees receive the appropriate support.  **Situational Vulnerability:** AP highlighted the concept of situational vulnerability, where temporary conditions such as intoxication, grief, or medication effects could make a person vulnerable and drew attention to the need to consider these factors in assessments.  **Vulnerability Assessment:**  **Case Examples:** AP provided examples of situational vulnerability, such as a person experiencing grief or a temporary medical condition and emphasised the need for Appropriate Adults to be involved in such cases to ensure fair treatment.  NW to circulate the presentation to the visitors. | **NW** |
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| **5.** | **Scheme Update and Performance Framework Update** |  |
|  | NW informed the meeting there were 10 custody visitors on the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. LL would be taking a break from visits for the time being.  NW advised the meeting that 12 visits were scheduled between January and March. Of the report forms received, the Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) completed 13 visits. 1 visit was scheduled for w/c 30th December which took place in the first week of January.  NW informed the meeting there had been a good variety of days, mostly weekday mornings and afternoons, 1 evening and 1 weekend visit.  NW thanked the visitors for undertaking an evening and weekend visit and asked that these continued in the following quarter.  NW asked the visitors to use more than one row on the visit report form should they need to and put an arrow down to indicate that it relates to the same cell. Should a continuation sheet be required, they could request the officer take a copy of the form in the folder held by custody.  A discussion was held around the ICVA introducing electronic visit forms; NW to keep the meeting updated.  NW advised the meeting that the percentage of detainees that had accepted a visit over the last quarter was 73%.  NW informed the meeting there had been 1 delay over 15 minutes to access the custody unit, but overall access was within an acceptable time.  A discussion was held about the processing of transgender detainees.  RD confirmed that following the recent Supreme Court ruling around the definition of biological sex, Gwent Police would continue with the current procedures that were in place and await the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) national guidance.  RD confirmed until further guidance had been received from the NPCC, the gender in which the detainee presented as, would be searched by the same gender if a search was required.  RD confirmed there had been no issues within custody regarding searching of transgender detainees. | **NW** |
| **6.** | **Any Other Business** |  |
|  | The updated visit report form to be sent to Ystrad Custody unit.  A discussion ensued regarding the use of electronic search devices as used in prisons to determine if prisoners were carrying drugs within their body parts as it could be beneficial to the Force and detainees as officers would not need to contact the searches directly and it would be less invasive for the detainee. RD informed the meeting he had not heard of the body scanning wand and that there had been no deaths in custody over recent years, so the risk was minimal. | **CH** |
| **7.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, 16th July 2025.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 8:17pm**

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| **Jane Mudd, 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.** | |
| **Signed** | **Date**  **23.09.2025** |

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