



## COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT

### Custody & Detention – Women in Custody

21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

<b>Scrutiny Panel:</b>	<b>Custody &amp; Detention</b>
<b>Members:</b>	<p>Jim Rowley – Chair George Beech MBE Samantha Couzens Sue Westwick Sue Mather</p> <p>Also present: Inspector Matt Broughton Michelle Ryan – SCO Holly Sproston - SCO</p>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<p>The Force has a Female Detainees in Custody Policy. The purpose of this scrutiny was to ensure that the correct procedures have been followed with regard to this policy and recommended best practice for women within custody.</p> <p>For all aspects, the scrutiny should demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the needs of female detainees were recognised and dealt with in terms of<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pregnancy?</li><li>• breastfeeding/ nursing mother?</li><li>• Peri-menopausal/ menopausal/ post-menopausal?</li></ul></li><li>- Has it been recorded properly within the custody log?</li></ul>
<b>Panel Findings:</b>	<p>This is the first time that the panel had looked at the process for Women in custody. The panel were initially offered a selection of 204 female custody records for the time period February 2024.</p> <p>At the pre-meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024, the panel chose 9 records to scrutinise. Custody Records were requested from the Force. The panel members were provided with a check list of processes and good practice – Appendix 1.</p> <p><b>Custody Record C24001858 – Northern Area Custody Facility.</b> Individual was detained for 14 hours 40 minutes. Allocated a cell on the Vulnerable wing. All relevant processes were followed. The detainee was offered an additional mattress.</p>



It was not clear from the custody log that the detainee was informed of a new allocated female officer on a change of shift. All other processes completed and recorded in the custody log.

**Custody Record C24002569 – Northern Area Custody Facility.**

Individual was detained for 21 hours and 24 minutes. Allocated a cell on the Vulnerable wing. It was not clear from the custody log that the detainee had been informed of who the allocated female officer was at any time during her detention or that showers and exercise yard were available.

**Custody Record C240025994 – Northern Area Custody Facility.**

Individual was detained for 8 hours and 44 minutes. Allocated a cell on the Vulnerable wing. All processes were completed. However, it was not clear from the custody log that the detainee was informed of a new allocated female officer on a change of shift. This may be because a change of shift did not occur during her detention period. The panel noted that exceptional time and care had been given to this first-time detainee.

**Custody Record C243003420 – Northern Area Custody Facility.**

Individual was detained for 16 Hours and 3 minutes. Allocated a cell on the Vulnerable wing. Detainee initially presented as Indeterminate gender but was referred to as both male and female during their detention. Detainee identified as having mental health issues and was supported by the Health Care professionals accordingly. It was not clear from the custody log that the detainee had been asked the relevant questions for female detainees.

**Recommendations and Observations:**

The panel have noted the following:

**Observations:**

- In all of the custody logs scrutinised the detainee was not notified of a change of allocated female officer on a change shift.
- The panel wondered whether all females are asked the relevant questions regarding pregnancy/ breastfeeding/ menopause during their detention. It was not clear from the custody log and in some cases the entry on these fields indicated N/A – not applicable. The panel felt this should be a yes or no answer, only to avoid any speculation on whether this question had been asked or not.

**Recommendations:**

- Officer to be reminded that female detainees must be informed of the change of allocated female officer on shift change.



- Questions regarding pregnancy/ breastfeeding/ menopause should require a Yes/ No answer only to avoid any speculation on whether this question had been asked or not.

**Force Lead Response:**

Custody would like to thank the panel for taking the time to review this new subject area which is an area of particular focus for custody. It is an area that now has a thematic lead for ourselves and receives extra scrutiny. It is valuable to also incorporate outside opinion on this.

The scrutiny has reflections from our own dip sampling where the identification of vulnerability and care appears good and the relevant referrals are made. However, the identified weaknesses around the handover of individual care between shifts is often missed. Messaging will be refreshed in regard to this to all staff and the Commissioner's report will be shared with the team. We would like to offer reassurance that questions around pregnancy are asked to all female detainees on booking in.

# CUSTODY & DETENTION SCRUTINY – WOMEN IN CUSTODY



**21 March 2024**

	Custody Log No.	Detention Date:	Venue:
<b>1</b>	<b>Booking In</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
	Was the DP informed that she had been allocated a dedicated female officer and was she informed of the name?		
	Was the DP informed that conversations with the dedicated officer can be held in private?		
	Was the DP informed that sanitary packs are available? And asked whether one was required?		
	Is the DP informed that showers are available?		
	Is the DP asked whether they are pregnant? At what point?		
	Is the DP asked whether they are a breastfeeding / nursing mother?		
	If NACF, was the DP allocated a cell on A wing? If not, why not?		
	If SACF, was the DP is it clear whether the DP is housed in a cell away from male DPs?		
	Has the DP been offered distraction materials?		
<b>2</b>	<b>Pregnant Detainees</b>		
	Is the DP pregnant?		
	If yes, has the DP been referred to HCP		
	Has the DP been offered any items to assist with their comfort? e.g. additional pillows/ blankets		
<b>3</b>	<b>Breastfeeding/ Nursing Detainees</b>		
	Is the DP a breastfeeding/ nursing mother?		
	If yes, has the DP been referred to HCP		
	Have care arrangements been made for the child?		
	Has the DP been offered any items to assist with their comfort? e.g. additional pillows/ blankets		



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