



COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT

Custody & Detention – Use of Force in Custody

12th March 2026

Scrutiny Panel:	Custody & Detention
Members:	<p>Fred Cox Sue Mather Paul Smith Karen Sulway Jennifer Watkins Sue Westwick</p> <p>Also present: Chief Inspector Rob Peacock Michelle Ryan – SCO</p>
Purpose:	<p>That the correct procedure has been followed regarding the use of force within custody. To ensure that the process is compliant with the law and best practice.</p> <p>For all aspects, the scrutiny should demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Was the action/level of force used justified?- Was the use of force used proportionate?- Has it been recorded properly on the UOF form and within the custody log?
Panel Findings:	<p>The panel were initially offered a selection of fifty records from the period 15th January 2026 to 15th February 2026 for Use of Force used in custody. This did not include compliant handcuffing.</p> <p>At the pre-meeting on 26th February 2026, the panel chose eight records to scrutinise. Custody Records were requested from the Force. A search was also undertaken for any Body Worn Video footage. For two of the incidents, further investigation revealed that no use of force had been used in custody. Use of Force had been prior to attending custody and the location of the force had been recorded incorrectly on the Use of Force form. Body Worn Video/CCTV footage was available for three of the selections. For the other three incidents, there had been no body worn video footage as the incident had been spontaneous and there had been no time to activate body worn cameras.</p>



Custody Record C226002904– Northern Area Custody Facility

- Body worn video footage was available and shows a black male arriving at custody. He appears under the influence. Detainee was already handcuffed.
- Detainee is abusive to officers within the holding cell.
- Detainee becomes racially abusive and appears to spit at Custody sergeant during booking in process.
- Detainee is red carded and brought to ground and restrained in cell.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C26002837 – Northern Area Custody Facility

- Body worn video footage was available and shows a white male adult already restrained on the cell floor.
- Detainee had been red carded at booking in.
- Officers are calm and reassuring.
- Detainee appears under the influence and loses consciousness.
- Medical staff enter the cell with police and the detainee regains consciousness.
- Appropriate restraint techniques were used to ensure safety of detainee and staff.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C26002710 – Northern Area Custody Facility

- Body worn video footage was available and shows a white male adult in handcuffs in the Holding cell.
- The detainee was extremely vocal and intent on provoking a reaction from officers.
- The detainee slips out of his handcuffs, and two officers restrain detainee on the floor.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C26002211 – Northern Area Custody Facility

- Use of Force not used in custody. Applied prior to entering custody.

Custody Record C26001786 – Northern Area Custody Facility

- Use of Force not used in custody. Applied prior to entering custody.

Custody Record C26001581 – Southern Area Custody Facility

- Custody Record indicates Use of Force used in custody, but no body worn video footage is available.



- Custody Record indicates that use of force requirement was spontaneous, and it is assumed that insufficient time to activate camera.

Custody Record C26001378 – Southern Area Custody Facility

- Custody Record indicates Use of Force used in custody, but no body worn video footage is available.
- Custody Record indicates that use of force requirement was spontaneous, and it is assumed that insufficient time to activate camera.

Custody Record C C26001336 – Southern Area Custody Facility

- Custody Record indicates Use of Force used in custody, but no body worn video footage is available.
- Custody Record indicates that use of force requirement was spontaneous, and it is assumed that insufficient time to activate camera.

Observations and Recommendations:

The panel have noted the following:

Observations:

- The panel noted that the scrutiny of the use of force was much more enhanced where the provision of body worn video footage or CCTV was available.
- The panel were able to view the situation and understand the issues and pressures facing detainees and officers in the custody environment.
- Having body worn video footage also enabled the panel to cross reference the custody log with the footage and ensure that it corroborated the record.
- The panel felt that officers in the three incidents viewed remained calm and attempted to diffuse the situation.
- A panel member has asked whether there is any protocol/ time requirement to deal with a detainee who loses consciousness (as in Custody Record C26002837). The incident was subsequently reviewed by an Inspector who indicated that the Health Care Professional had attended within minutes. The Inspector confirmed that key performance indicators are set for the health care provider and these are rigorously monitored.

Recommendations:

- That officers in custody use body worn video cameras when Use of Force is anticipated.
- The provision of CCTV for incidents where Use of Force is not recorded on body worn cameras would assist the panel with a more robust scrutiny of use of force within custody.



Force Lead Response:

I would like to thank the panel for their time and feedback.

I have noted the comments and observations. Moving forward Custody Detention Officers will be issued personal issue body worn video cameras which they do not have at this time. This will hopefully support more incidents being captured. It is not always easy to predict Use of Force in custody. As can be seen in the logs and custody updates, there has been no indication to escalation prior. Where it has been anticipated, this has been captured on Body Worn Video

This has been reiterated on recent Continuing Professional Development days, and new Occurrence Enquiry Log templates have been created to show clearer documentation.