



COMMISSIONER'S INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY REPORT

Custody & Detention – Use of Force in Custody

6th March 2025

Scrutiny Panel:	Custody & Detention
Members:	<p>Martin Adams Sue Mather Jennifer Watkins Sue Westwick</p> <p>Also present: Chief Inspector Rob Peacock Michelle Ryan – SCO Holly Sproston - SCO</p>
Purpose:	<p>That the correct procedure has been followed with regard to 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 68 records from the time period 1st December 2024 to 31st January 2025 for Use of Force used in custody. This selection did not include compliant handcuffing which the Panel had agreed to not scrutinise.</p> <p>At the pre-meeting on 25th February 2025, the panel chose 10 records to scrutinise. Custody Records were requested from the Force. A search was also undertaken for any Body Worn Video footage. Body Worn Video/CCTV footage was available for four of the selections.</p> <p>Custody Record C24021229– Northern Area Custody Facility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body worn video footage was available and shows a female young person (age 17) in custody in an agitated and upset mood. Detainee was already handcuffed.• There were several officers talking to the young female at once, which was confusing.• The panel felt that a lead officer should have been the main focus in asking the detainee the questions.



- The Body Worn Video enabled an appreciation of how volatile the situation was and brought a greater context to the situation.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C24023039 – Northern Area Custody Facility

- CCTV footage was available and shows a female adult person in a camera cell. There was no audio to the footage.
- Custody Record indicated that detainee was awaiting assessment under Mental Health Act.
- Medical staff enter the cell with police and the detainee becomes very agitated.
- Appropriate restraint techniques were used to ensure safety of detainee and staff.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C25000435 – Southern Area Custody Facility

- Body worn video footage was available. The detainee was a male adult.
- The BWV showed the arrival of the detainee outside of custody and entering custody suite in to the holding cell.
- The detainee was extremely vocal and intent on provoking a reaction from officers.
- The detainee threatened to spit at officers and a spit hood was placed over the detainee's head.
- The detainee appeared to focus on a particular officer. The officer restraining was changed but the detainee remained aggressive.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

Custody Record C25000605 – Southern Area Custody Facility

- Body worn video footage was available. The detainee was an adult male.
- The detainee was brought in to custody wearing handcuffs.
- Whilst being booked in, the detainee had become aggressive and head butted the custody desk.
- Several officers restrained the detainee in a prone position. The custody sergeant was very calm and was extremely efficient in de-escalating the situation.
- The Use of Force used was appropriate, proportionate and necessary.



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 there was confusion for the young female in the first incident due to the number of officers asking questions and the detainee being unable to focus. There was a similar situation in the final incident which was handled well with an experienced sergeant taking control and being the sole point of focus for communication.
- The panel felt that the custody sergeant in the last incident handled the situation extremely well and was clearly experienced in dealing with this type of situation.

Recommendations:

- That officers in custody are provided with body worn video cameras and these are used when Use of Force is anticipated.

Force Lead Response:

I have nothing further to add. I think the views and questions asked were really insightful and balanced. I agreed with the views of the first review, bit too much going on but with good intent.

I do think there is a benefit to allow Sgts to sit on some of the panels to see how it works and also the importance of them getting it right. I have offered the invite to the wider team to see if anyone wishes to join me on a panel in the future.