

Independent Custody Visitors –Southern Panel

Minutes of the meeting held at Police HQ - Block 9 on 23 September 2021 at 18:30

These minutes are not verbatim but aim to give an overview of items discussed and actions arising

No:	Item:		
1	Welcome	Attendees: Anita Griffiths Bev Cooper Michael Guest Anna Shaw Ravi Bhakhri Inspector Tim Heap – Watling Custody Facility Michelle Ryan- Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (SCO) Caroline Gascoyne- Staffordshire Commissioner's Office	Non Attendees: Lisa Tunney Gail Smith
2	Minutes and Matters Arising	<p>The previous minutes were agreed. There was one outstanding action, which was to invite Sgts Will Evans and Mark Lee to a future panel meeting to discuss the distraction techniques currently being used in Watling custody facility This action to be completed asap.</p> <p>The panel were informed that Patrick Carter has resigned and had indicated this was due to personal reasons. Two new recruits are currently waiting for security clearance and their induction would be progressed once this had been received.</p>	
3	Visits	<p>Panel members gave a quick update of the visits conducted since the last panel meeting. The following minor issues were noted:-</p> <p>Michael Guest informed the panel that feedback from a recent visit indicated that Custody staff were happy to see ICVs undertaking face to face meetings. Michael also indicated that he was concerned about the lack of reading material for detainees. He was particularly concerned about the lack of pictorial reading material for those detainees who may have learning/reading difficulties. Inspector Heap indicated that he would look in to this and see what could be done.</p>	

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		<p>Anita Griffiths noted that the type of food available to detainees had changed and indicated that there appeared to have been some issues around how this new type of food was actually prepared for detainees. Inspector Heap reassured the panel that the issues had now been addressed and the new food, which included pizzas and foods more attractive to the younger detainees, were proving very popular.</p> <p>Ravi Bhakhri indicated he had some concerns with how religious books were being stored. It was agreed that the guidance from ICVA would be sent out to all ICVs and to the Custody Inspectors.</p> <p>It was agreed that a rota for the period from the end of October to the end of December would be developed by the SCO. Additional in depth checks on food, kitchen cleanliness, ligature release, bedding store etc would be included.</p> <p>Panel members indicated that the custody record printouts were now indicating the cell number and all agreed that the information on the print outs was thorough and detailed.</p> <p>Panel members stated they would like their thanks and appreciation for the professionalism of the custody staff towards the ICVs recorded.</p>
5	Police Update	<p>Inspector Tim Heap indicated that Custody was becoming very busy and back to pre covid levels. The panel were also informed that HMICFRS were currently within in Force undertaking an inspection with particular focus on Custody and Young Persons Services, especially in Custody. Inspector Heap indicated that the HMICFRS were focussing on how young people were treated within the system on a national basis. Inspector Heap explained that the priority is to ensure that young people should not be kept overnight in custody. However the strain on other support agencies sometimes meant that this was not feasible. Early indications were that the Inspectors had been impressed with the distraction packages in place at Custody.</p> <p>Inspector Heap informed the panel that there is an intention to refurbish one of the cells to make it more young person friendly and less intimidating. It was noted that children in custody was a priority area and Custody Inspectors regularly</p>

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		<p>undertook dip sampling of young person's detention records to ensure the best support is offered and their time within the environment is limited.</p> <p>Inspector Heap was asked whether there had been a reduction in the number of young people being detained. He indicated that during Covid there had been a very slight reduction.</p> <p>The panel were informed that part of Watling station was to become the new Property store and as such the security arrangements for the site were being made more robust. This would include some changes to access. The panel were informed that whilst these changes were being implemented, delays may be experienced in accessing custody. In addition refurbishment within Custody was also being planned. This would see a more spacious Booking in area and better flow for detainees and custody staff.</p> <p>The panel were informed that all the sinks in the cells would shortly be replaced as a potential ligature point had been identified.</p> <p>Recruitment of Custody Detention Officers was still ongoing. The usual staffing issues continued but had been managed effectively despite covid issues and staff attending training sessions.</p> <p>Inspector Heap indicated that the demand for Appropriate Adults (AAs) was high and that the number of available AAs was low. Inspector Heap was informed that a recent recruitment drive meant that 4 AAs were now in the pipeline awaiting security clearance and training.</p>
7	Staffordshire Commissioner Update	<p>The panel were informed that ICVA were looking to introduce a new in-depth review of custody records. The SCO had met with the Panel Co-ordinator of the Northern ICV Panel to discuss running a trial of the new Custody Record Review process. This process would be separate from the current face to face detainee visits. This would involve robust scrutiny of the custody record only. A meeting with the Head of Custody is to be scheduled with a view to getting agreement to run the trial at NACF.</p>

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		<p>Panel members were informed that ICVA is moving to on line training packages and a number of these had been emailed out to all ICVS as part of their ICVA Newsletters. It was explained that there is an expectation that ICVs undertake these on line sessions. A record would be made on the training database of the date that these sessions were sent out to ICVs.</p> <p>The panel indicated that they would wish the SCO to act as Panel Co-ordinator for the foreseeable future. The Panel were informed that a more local venue was now available for panel meetings. Cannock Community Fire Station would be booked for the next meeting and a schedule of dates for 2022 will be developed and circulated to ICVs shortly. It was agreed that there would be 6 meetings in 2022.</p>
8	AOB	Ravi Bhakhri asked whether the visits scheduled to take place between 22:00 and 06:00 could be reinstated. The panel were informed that these could restart.
19	Date and Time of Next Meetings	9th December 2021 at Cannock Community Fire Station at 18:30

Action Log:

Action	Responsible
• ICVA information on how to store religious reading material correctly to be sent to panel and custody inspectors.	MR
• Sgt Mark Lee and Sgt Will Evans to be invited to next panel meeting	CG
• Rota to be completed with appropriate checks added	CG
• ICVs to familiarise themselves with on-line Training Sessions recently emailed to them	ICVs