

## Monthly Assurance Meeting May 2022– Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday 26th May, 10:30 am  
 Chair: John Campion  
 Minutes: Charity Pearce, Assistant Policy Officer, OPCC  
 Venue West Mercia Police HQ

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Capacity:</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Policy Officer (NN)
	Charity Pearce	Assistant Policy Officer (CP)
	Pippa Mills	Chief Constable (CC)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Richard Cooper	Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

<b>PCC opening comment</b>	<b>Force response</b>
The PCC highlighted that the briefing note supplied ahead of the meeting was a good quality document setting out at a strategic level, action taken so far. Adding that this was a reassuring start to the meeting.	

<b>HMICFRS Custody inspection</b>		
<b>Cause of concern</b>	<b>PCC's assurance questions</b>	<b>Force response</b>
<p><b>Oversight of custody provision</b></p> <p><i>The force should strengthen its governance and oversight of custody in the following way- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of custody officers, detention officers and others carrying out custody duties so that staff are used in the correct and most effective way. It should agree these roles and responsibilities with Bidvest Noonan, including how staff should be directed and supervised in the suite, so that any required changes can be implemented.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The briefing note highlights that the force have recently adapted their operational model by creating a T/Supt post for supervision of Custody. The PCC sought reassurance around the longer term vision for the model and consistent implementation.</li> <li>2. The PCC asked if a quarterly oversight meeting with Bidvest Noonan to review performance of detainee officers allowed activity to be driven in a timely manner.</li> <li>3. The PCC sought clarity around what the detentions officer role will look like in custody in the future.</li> <li>4. The PCC asked for reassurance that concerns highlighted by HMICFRS will be built into any future model of service delivery.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The CC said that there has been a wider shift of the custody department from the Local policing portfolio into Criminal Justice. This has allowed an opportunity to review the whole process. Currently this role is an interim post but a review will take place in July to look at the longer term plan and whether this will become permanent.</li> <li>2. The CC responded that a review around the staffing model is referenced in the report, once a decision has been made it will be escalated to Governance Board. The ACC added that this will also feed into existing governance meetings for custody. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The PCC clarified that given inconsistencies across custody blocks he was seeking reassurance around how the force drive change from a quarterly meeting. The CC said that scrutiny needs to be tighter than a discussion, the force need to hold Bidvest Noonan to account around contract activity.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. The CC said that a decision has been made to go to market but also run a costing exercise alongside for in house running of the detention officer contract. The CC was also confident that the force had mapped out the role governance would have in the process.</li> <li>4. The CC answered yes, the causes of concern will be explicitly referenced within any future contract. The ACC said that many references were made within the report to training and CPD and have already been progressed.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Meeting legal requirements</b></p> <p><i>The force should take immediate action to ensure that all custody procedures and practices comply with legislation.</i></p>	<p>5. The PCC sought reassurance that there is a plan in place to have a representative workforce within custody to ensure female detainees are appropriately assigned a female member of staff.</p> <p>6. HMICFRS found that not all custody officers were aware of the PACE requirement around translation of documents and records. The PCC asked alongside CPD what other practical aspects the force will introduce to ensure detainees have access to translation services.</p>	<p>5. The ACC said yes, a new search function on the system allows for improved auditing. Robust audit activity is now in place and shows improvements. However, he doesn't have the same level of confidence around makeup of workforce, this links in to earlier discussions around contract provision but the force do meet legal requirements.</p> <p>a. The PCC added that custody is a male dominated environment and asked if the CC was confident planned activity would address this issue and what the aspiration was for custody workforce to be representative. The CC responded that she was confident it will improve within 12 months. Representation will be a requirement in any future contract with evidence base needed to support it.</p> <p>6. The CC said that CPD had already taken place, they are now looking at ATHENA and changes that can be made to the system to improve access, however this is not a finding found in other ATHENA force areas.</p> <p>a. The PCC sought clarity that detainee officers have access to a translation system. The CC provided assurances that they can access the system. She would expect this work to feed into the C&amp;V meeting.</p>
<p><b>Use of force</b></p> <p>The force should scrutinise the use of force in custody to show that when force is used in custody, it is necessary and proportionate. This scrutiny should be based on accurate</p>	<p>7. HMICFRS identified that there is no external scrutiny of use of force in custody. The PCC asked whether the force had determined how they will achieve the external scrutiny required.</p>	<p>7. The ACC said that new recording system now ensures more accurate recording and this will feed into use of force board. The next step is to determine independent scrutiny, either through ICV's or another group. The CC added that there is work already underway to look at how the force can utilise custody visitors for independent scrutiny.</p> <p>a. The PCC asked when the force expect to see improvements in scrutiny provision. The ACC said that</p>

<p>information and robust quality assurance, including viewing CCTV footage of incidents.</p>	<p>8. The PCC highlighted his statutory responsibility for the ICV scheme. He asked if there is more that ICV's can do to drive service improvements in Custody.</p> <p>9. The PCC asked the CC whether there is any disproportionality in UoF in custody following the introduction of a new recording system.</p> <p>10. The PCC asked what the quality assurance process highlighted in the forces action plan entailed, who oversees it and where any issues are reviewed.</p>	<p>introduction of the new system should see the force move from red to amber on RAG rating.</p> <p>8. The CC said that force are attending the ICV training day in July and highlighted that a checklist approach has worked well elsewhere to ensure ICVs look at all areas within the custody setting.</p> <p>9. The CC said that now more accurate data is available this will allow analysis to take place.</p> <p>10. The ACC answered that this is internal audit activity using a template document on excel assessing a number of areas and provides a prompt for officers. This audit report is overseen by the Supt with by exception reporting into the C&amp;V board. The DCC added that the frequency of the custody governance board has increased to monthly to provide increased assurance over the next few months.</p>
<p><b>Detainee Safety</b></p> <p>The force should take immediate action to mitigate the risk to detainees by ensuring that its risk management practices are safe, follow APP guidance, and are consistently carried out to the required standard.</p>	<p>11. The PCC highlighted that the inspectorate identified 3 cases relating to unethical behaviour. He sought reassurance that this is not indicative of a wider culture of non-compliance.</p>	<p>11. The DCC provided assurance that cases have been appropriately assessed with action taken. The inspection was a wakeup call for the custody team but this is a matter for the leadership team. Dip sampling will be undertaken as done by HMICFRS.</p> <p>a. NN added that cases had previously been shared with supervisors in custody who determined behaviour was acceptable until it was reviewed by a Chief Officer. She asked if there was enough training around the code of ethics at supervisory level. The CC responded that the initial review wasn't undertaken by the right person, this should have been done by the professional standards department. The ACC added that CPD training focusses</p>

	<p>12. The action plan shows that a number of actions are to be delivered by other departments across the force. The PCC asked the CC if she was confident all resources were being used across the organisation to deliver the action plan.</p>	<p>not just on technical aspects but also on the culture and human aspect.</p> <p>b. The PCC added that there is a big gap in the discipline ranks between detention officers and sergeants in custody. He asked if the culture was there to support people wanting to speak out. The DCC said that this hasn't been flagged as an issue but that he will look into it.</p> <p>12. The CC said she was confident and reassured that other departments were contributing in delivering the action plan. PNC training for OCC staff will help with closing the gaps around vulnerability as will the introduction of the vulnerability desk.</p>
<p><b>Detainee Care</b></p> <p><i>The force should significantly improve the care of detainees by making sure they are regularly offered drinks and food. Access to other aspects of care should be readily available to detainees without them having to ask for them.</i></p>	<p>13. HMICFRS found that Detention officers aren't proactive in offering care, despite having the time to do so and found that a 'request culture' is commonplace. The PCC asked whether the CC was satisfied planned activity would address this issue.</p> <p>14. The PCC highlighted that a number of ICVs have raised concerns about the amount and variety of food in custody suites and asked what is being done to address it.</p>	<p>13. The CC said that this links to wider work around culture discussed earlier in the meeting but she is satisfied steps in place will drive change. The DCC and ACC added that the message is being pushed from custody Supt. role but this is an area where ICV's could drive voice of the detainees.</p> <p>14. The CC provided reassurance that she was not aware this was an issue. The PCC provided further detail of findings from ICVs and sought assurance that strategic oversight was in place to fix it. The CC said she would expect this to be reported as an exception at C&amp;V Board but that Chief Officers will provide themselves with assurances to formalise the process of reporting.</p>

	<p>15. In 21/22, the PCC invested £400 into each custody block for bulk buying of reading books, paper &amp; puzzles, pens, etc identified by staff that might help in improving custody experience or having a positive impact on detainees (£2k total investment). However, HMICFRS report that detainee access to such materials is very limited. The PCC asked for clarity in how his investment was utilised.</p> <p>16. The PCC asked how the force addressed perceptions of custody to make it a department where people want to work.</p> <p>17. HMICFRS found that the supply of religious items and texts to meet individual needs is inconsistent throughout the suites and not all staff know about them. Some are in a poor condition and some main faiths aren't adequately provided for, including Qibla markings. The PCC asked whether the force had engaged with national forces to identify best practice for religious</p>	<p>15. The CC said she was not aware of the specific investment made by the PCC but that steps are in place to address the issue identified by HMICFRS. The PCC asked how she got reassurance that these things were in place. The DCC said that this forms part of the audit dip sample undertaken on a monthly basis and is included in CPD training.</p> <p>16. The CC responded that custody is a choice posting for some and this is shown by how long some people spend in the department. A benefit from posting newly promoted sergeants into custody is that they are required to evidence leadership and custody can be beneficial for this.</p> <p>17. The ACC said that there shouldn't be inconsistencies in provisions provided between custody blocks, work has started to review what is available at different sites and this may benefit from an external view such as the IAG. The CC added that a simple task shouldn't be reliant on external scrutiny. There was a specific request to seek out best practice when custody Supt. attended HMIC inspectorate in another force area.</p>
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	provisions given to detainees.	
<p><b>First Point of contact- AFI</b></p> <p>The force should make sure that frontline officers have access to good quality information and in enough time to help them respond to incidents and make appropriate decisions. In particular the force should ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. information about incidents, and any individuals involved, is easily available from the call handlers or through their own technology; and</li> <li>2. Advice and assistance from mental health professionals is available to help deal with people with mental ill health in the most appropriate way.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Good awareness of existing liaison and diversion services was identified by HMICFRS, however onward referral was inconsistent. The PCC asked how the force can improve working relationships with existing services to address the issues affecting mental health in the custody setting.</li> <li>19. The PCC asked for an assessment of how effectively his estates function was providing support to address some actions within the plan.</li> <li>20. The PCC said that findings of the inspection were disappointing and have caused unnecessary damage and distraction for the organisation. He asked how the CC was reassured that changes made will be sustainable.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. The ACC said that this relates to the availability of information to officers outside of custody. Earlier discussion around training for OCC staff and the vulnerability desk will improve this. However, once in custody is he confident around the provision of mental health services available to detainees.</li> <li>19. The CC answered that there have been no issues escalated to her. The ACC confirmed that no concerns have been raised for estates support but there are concerns around the scale of the task to comply with HMICFRS recommendations.</li> <li>20. The CC responded that the inspection was a wakeup call, during her initial few months in the role she hadn't got round to visiting the custody suites. She is now reassured around the oversight and training in place. Going forwards she will make sure contractual arrangements clearly set out what is expected. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The PCC highlighted that HMICFRS are due to revisit in 12 months' time for a review of progress before a full inspection in 3 years' time. He asked whether judgement will be given following the review of progress and what the aspiration is for the full re inspection in 3 years' time. The DCC said they understand that inspectorate will comment if not satisfied recommendations are being addressed in 12 months' time. The CC added that her expectation and aspiration is that a grading of outstanding will be given in 3 years.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<b>AOB:</b>		
	<p>21. NN asked about AFI 4, relating to detainees being able to make a complaint before they leave custody. She asked for reassurance that action had been taken to ensure this was complied with.</p> <p>22. The CC flagged AFI 8 setting out that the force and OPCC should work with local authorities to improve the provision of alternative accommodation for children refused bail. She asked whether data was available through the LCJB.</p>	<p>21. The DCC said he was reassured that quick wins had been completed such as putting up posters but wasn't reassured there was a culture to resolve a complaint. He will review and monitor compliance.</p> <p>22. <b>ACTION: PCC to review how LCJB can assist the force to work with local authorities to improve provision of alternative accommodation.</b></p>