



Criminal Justice:

Leading and supporting a partnership response to the national emergency

Independent Custody Visitors, Appropriate Adults

Presented by

Meg Jones, Head of Policy

Sarah Gilbert, Regional Policy Officer

Sarah Matta, Volunteer Coordinator

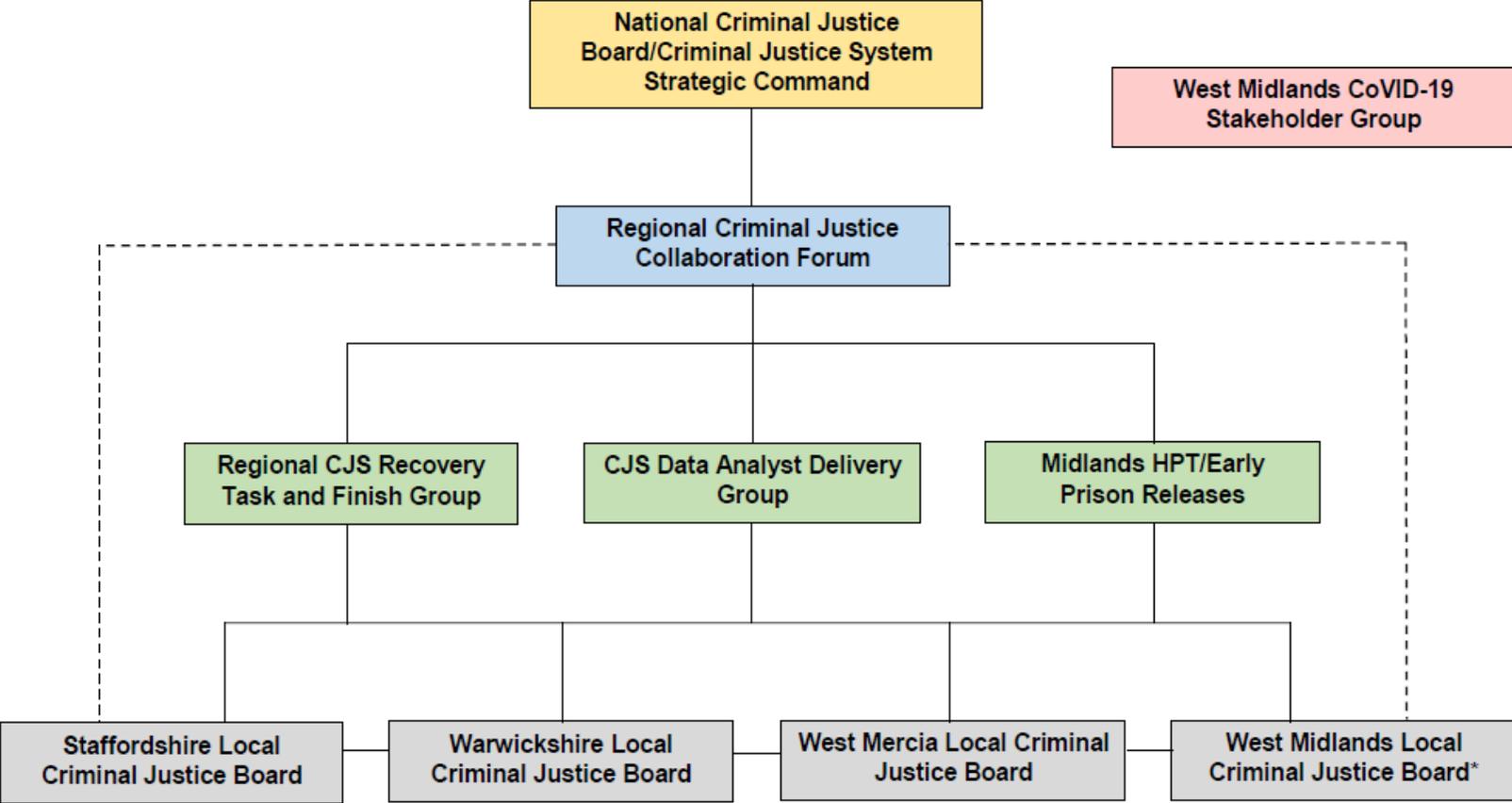
Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is provide members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board with an update and overview of the OPCC role in Criminal Justice with a focus on the response during COVID-19, as set out in the new emergency chapter of the Police and Crime plan
2. The report will set out progress against the activities within the chapter and highlight key areas of work that have progressed in the Criminal Justice space.
3. Objective 3 of the emergency plan is 'leading and supporting a partnership response to the national emergency'. Recognising that civic leadership during a pandemic is critical, the PCC recognised that partnership working across the Criminal Justice System is key.
4. The PCC promised to translate national COVID-19 plans locally and ensure that partnership structures in the West Midlands could respond appropriately to the suspension of Crown court trials, self-isolation and potential early release of prisoners.

Criminal Justice Structures

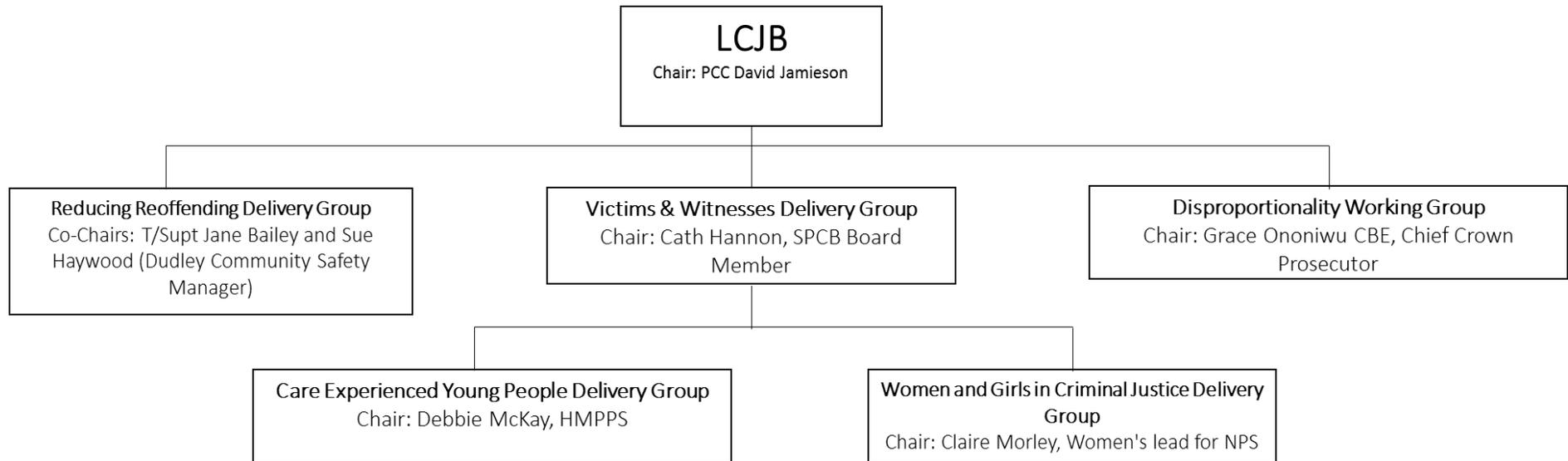
5. There are local, regional and national criminal justice structures that exist and of which the West Midlands both leads and co-ordinates, particularly during the emergency period. Figure 1 outlines the structures that have been utilised over the last six months to facilitate a multi-agency partnership approach to tackling the issues that have emerged as a result of COVID-19.

Regional Criminal Justice Governance Structure- Schedule of Meetings



6. In 2019, a Regional Criminal Justice Forum was brought together, which introduced regional governance, covering Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands in response to a number of issues. These included the geographical footprint of CJ partners that sit at a regional level rather than local, the change in probation model back to regional delivery with the role of PCCs as co-commissioners and an opportunity to collaborate on work that might previously have been duplicated across the region. It was agreed that this meeting would take place twice a year.
7. The regional structure allows connectivity and communication with the National Criminal Justice Board and allows the Local Criminal Justice Boards to focus on local issues. In addition, regional work such as the crime in prisons project set precedent for how the region could collaborate on areas of priority.
8. Recognising the increased pressure on criminal justice partners and the shared issues that the pandemic presented across the region, a decision was made to postpone LCJB meetings during the period of COVID-19, and stand up the Regional Criminal Justice Forum as a monthly meeting which has allowed the regional governance mechanism to lead the response and recovery, and minimise duplication.
9. Emerging from the Regional Criminal Justice Forum has been Regional CJS Recovery Task and Finish Group which looks at what changes have been required of the criminal justice system as a result of COVID-19 and what can be learnt and implemented as part of future restore and rebuild phases.
10. This approach recognised that agencies were developing their own internal recovery plans. As part of these plans consideration was being given to how some of the changes implemented during this crisis could later be built into business as usual processes. The group, chaired by DPCC Waheed Saleem and represented by all criminal justice partners across the region, continues to co-ordinate and pull together elements which have a direct interface between more than one agencies.
11. The regional structures have allowed considerable progress in the response to COVID-19.
12. Data has been shared between agencies, some data has never previously been shared across the system. This has allowed partners to identify areas of concern and work through solutions.
13. Working with our regional partners has also highlighted the duplication that can exist in the commissioning of reducing re-offending and criminal justice services. In recognition of this and in response to the announced changes to the National Probation Service from June 2021, a Regional Co-Commissioning Working Group has been set up to look at opportunities to commission services on a regional footprint.
14. Chaired by Regional Probation Director, Sarah Chand, the working group is has representatives from across the criminal justice system. From June 2021, with the introduction of the Dynamic Framework, the mechanism to procure rehabilitation and resettlement interventions in each area, some contracts carry the requirement that they should be delivered regionally. The co-commissioning working group puts us in a good position to start consideration opportunities and implications well in advance of its go-live.

West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board



West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board Structures

15. As recognised in paragraph 8, as the COVID pandemic emerged, the West Midlands Local Criminal Justice Board was postponed and the Regional Criminal Justice Forum was utilised in order to avoid duplication across the four force area and criminal justice partners.
16. The West Midlands LCJB re-convened in July 2020. The delivery groups that sit under the LCJB had continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic, responding to new issues with the development of new workplans, outlining priorities for the next year.
17. Members of the West Midlands LCJB discussed disproportionality in the criminal justice system and the Black Lives Matter movement. Disproportionality is a key workstream in each delivery group workplan. It was agreed that a separate task and finish group would be set up to focus on disproportionality.
18. A new disproportionality committee is due to meet imminently, chaired by Chief Crown Prosecutor for the West Midlands, Grace Ononiwu CBE.
19. The proposed programme of work will include an assessment of progress across the criminal justice system based on existing and previous reports such as the Lammy review. A focus on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the BAME community, listening and developing learning and understanding from the Black Lives Matter Movement and tracking the diversity of the workforce across various criminal justice agencies. The group will also look across the whole criminal justice system and use DIP sampling to assess compliance with the ambition of the committee and report back to the LCJB with recommendations for improvements.

Early Release and PCC Prison Release Package

20. As a response to the impact of COVID-19 within the prison estate, the development of an early release scheme called End of Custody Temporary Release (ECTR) scheme was announced by Government.
21. The Ministry of Justice announced on the 4th April that early release would be focused on two groups
 - Pregnant prisoners who do not pose a high risk of harm to the public would be temporarily released from prison to protect them and their unborn children from coronavirus. The same criteria applied to women prisoners in Mother and Baby Units who would also be released along with their children.
 - All prisoners who are within two months of their release date and are also assessed as low risk would be temporarily released from jail.
22. The Ministry of Justice announced that prisoners may also be released on temporary licence on compassionate grounds if they are vulnerable due to an existing medical condition.
23. The regional response meant that a separate task and finish group was set up to focus on the early release scheme, chaired by Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands, Waheed Saleem. The group helped to facilitate

cross-agency working, including confirming processes and intelligence sharing for decisions on individuals to take place.

24. As a response, the PCC also developed a PCC prison release package. This was pulled together using existing providers, funded by the PCC who had some additional capacity due to the pandemic.
25. The purpose of the package recognised that individuals leaving custody during a pandemic and at the height of lockdown would face a very different and difficult experience. The package intended to support individuals leaving custody and therefore reduce reoffending. The services offered were intended to complement and work alongside support already offered by the CRC or probation services.
26. In reality, the numbers of prisoners released across the country was much smaller than initially expected.

Commissioned Services

Cranstoun Arrest Referral Service

27. The Cranstoun Arrest Referral Service (CARS) was commissioned by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner to provide a consistent service for drug and alcohol referrals across the West Midlands area. The service went live in January 2020.
28. The aims of the service are to engage offenders in custody and provide an opportunity to break the cycle of drugs and offending. To engage offenders, the service works closely with probation services and courts to increase the number of Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATRs) and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs), which are proven to reduce re-offending rates and tackle the drivers behind criminality.
29. The service is open to anyone over the age of 18 in contact with West Midlands Police (offender or victim) and is accessible via Required Assessments, Voluntary Assessments, Police Referral (in or out of custody), Assessment as part of a pre-sentence Report within court or at the request of any West Midlands Police Officers/Staff who may be working with an individual who they feel would benefit from engagement with Cranstoun Arrest Referral Service (CARS).
30. The service provides wrap around support, helping individuals tackle the root causes of their drug and alcohol problems, and helping them to get their lives back on track through signposting for a range of services including housing and mental health support.
31. In response to COVID-19, the service has been operating over 7 days throughout the pandemic, the number of staff within custody at any one time has been limited. This approach has proven successful in ensuring the service continues to run and engage offenders as well as protect staff as much as possible. DRR and ATR suitability assessment via court have been completed on a duty system by those staff working from home.

32. To assist with the back log of cases that exist within the criminal justice system, CARS agreed to run a 3 month pilot around Conditional Cautions. The service has provided a consistent approach to Conditional Cautions across the West Midlands Force area by allowing quick access for officers to make bookings, reducing the workload.
33. Conditional Cautions are intended to be a swift and effective means of dealing with straightforward cases where the offender has admitted to the offence and agreed to comply with specified conditions aimed at addressing the cause of their offending behaviour.
34. Conditional cautions provide an opportunity: to offer a proportionate response to low level offending; for offenders to make swift reparation to victims and communities; for offenders to be diverted at an early opportunity into rehabilitative services thereby reducing the likelihood of re-offending; to punish an offender by means of a financial penalty.
35. The continuation of the service through COVID-19 has allowed the causes of criminality from drugs and alcohol to still be identified and therefore, reduce the impact on the criminal justice system where Alcohol Treatment Requirements and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements can be made instead of another criminal justice outcome.

New Chance Programme

36. New Chance is delivered by Anawim, Black Country Women's Aid, Changing Lives and Accord Housing Association in partnership with West Midlands Police and commissioned by the PCC.
37. This diversionary programme provides an early intervention for women who have received a conditional caution or community resolution to provide the support at the right time before they become entrenched within the Criminal Justice System.
38. The outcomes have been significant, from supporting women with their benefits, dealing with childhood trauma, domestic violence and sexual violence to supporting women into employment. The programme has been established based on the whole-systems approach and recognises the variety of vulnerabilities these women may be facing.
39. A recent evaluation by the University of Birmingham demonstrates that reoffending amongst New Chance service users with mental health issues was 35-37% lower and those who had substance misuse issues identified had a 51-55% decrease in reoffending.
40. In August 2020, this programme was also shortlisted by The Howard League for Penal Reform for a Community Award.
41. The OPCC set up a fortnightly meeting with West Midlands Police and the four providers of the New Chance programme for female offenders to ensure business continuity, monitor how this service delivery is working and navigate any changes or issues that arise throughout the pandemic.

42. During the Covid-19 lockdown, New Chance delivery remained business as usual with few adjustments, including virtual support rather than in person, and no face to face groups delivered.
43. Initially, referrals from WMP into the programme dropped significantly but all partners worked effectively together to increase awareness and engagement amongst officers and to eventually arrange for New Chance workers to go back into custody blocks. Referrals have now steadily increased.
44. During this time, the programme has also accepted referrals from probation for women who have been released from prison, as part of the PCC's prison release package, and New Chance also started accepting referrals from WMP for women who come into contact with the Police as a victim due to the link between victimisation and offending behaviour, especially in relation to DA.
45. As of August 2020, continuity meetings will be held monthly unless a need to hold them more frequently arises.
46. This work also sits within our broader work around women and girls in Criminal Justice System.
47. In July 2020, the OPCC held its first Women and Girls Delivery Group, a sub-group of the LCJB, which brings partners together to undertake work that will help to divert women away from the criminal justice system, reduce reoffending and address gender inequality within the criminal justice system.
48. The meeting is chaired by Claire Morley, Senior Probation Officer – Midlands Division Women's Champion and will meet monthly during this period in order to progress the work at pace and the action plan will include a specific Covid-19 work stream.

Independent Custody Visiting and Appropriate Adults

49. As part of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan, custody visiting is a means of building public confidence in standards of police custody and providing overall assurances that people detained in custody are being cared for appropriately.
50. The objectives of the Custody Visiting Scheme are to enable members of the community to:
 - (a) observe, comment and report upon the conditions under which persons are detained at any police station, including the operation, in practice, of the statutory and other rules governing their welfare;
 - (b) secure greater public understanding and confidence in these matters; and
 - (c) provide an independent check on the way officers in custody facilities carry out their duties with regard to detainees.

Background

51. Police and Crime Commissioners are required by statute to operate an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in consultation with their chief police officer.
52. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteer members of the public who are impartial, independent of the police and have no direct association with the criminal justice system. Their role is to visit police custody suites unannounced to evaluate the welfare of detainees. They visit police custody suites situated in Wolverhampton, Coventry, Perry Barr and Oldbury. The West Midlands custody scheme currently has over 60 volunteers.

Coronavirus pandemic

53. In March, guidelines set out by the Government in regards to the Coronavirus outbreak advised members of the public who were over 70, had underlying health issues or who were pregnant to self-isolate due to the risk posed to them. This meant that many of the schemes volunteers came under this criteria and would have to self-isolate.
54. Volunteers were asked to suspend visits until further notice if they came under any of the criteria's stated. This also included anyone who lived with a family member who could be at risk. It had been anticipated that the majority of volunteers would be isolating with only a small number possibly still able to continue.
55. Nationally, many ICVs schemes varied in how they were able to continue their oversight of custody. Some schemes had to suspend visits altogether, some were able to carry out telephone or custody records checks instead, some were able to carry out virtual remote visits and some continued visits in person.
56. As custody visiting is a statutory requirement there was a need to make sure oversight of custody continued in some way, in monitoring detention and checking the welfare of detainees. It was important that the ICV scheme adapted and found ways in order to continue this function, especially as police and resources could be stretched and under pressure given the Covid pandemic.
57. The scheme was fortunate enough to be able to continue physical visits to the Force's two largest custody suites Perry Barr and Oldbury. There were at least 8 custody visitors who were happy/ able to continue visits. A rota was drawn up for visits to take place at on a weekly basis.
58. Wolverhampton was set up as a Covid-19 designated custody suite for those suspected of having the virus. Volunteers who would have normally visited this site

were advised of the block's change in status. As an alternative to doing physically visits, remote contact with the block was established via telephone visits which was established fairly promptly in response.

59. Coventry's team of volunteers were unable to carry out physical visits as many came under the Government's criteria to self-isolate. Efforts were made to establish some form of remote visiting and at first, Skype or a similar video platform was looked into. In the meantime, a call from the OPCC at least once a week to the custody sergeant was established to keep some form of oversight.
60. Custody visitors carrying out visits (remotely or in person) were briefed about how their visits should be conducted. In addition to what they would usually comment on, they were also asked to observe and comment in particular on hygiene, provision of protective personal equipment, and other issues related to the Coronavirus crisis and how it impacted on the police's ability to provide safe custody. When it had been announced that virtual courts would be held in custody, additional briefing was given to custody visitors so they could also observe and comment on the impact they would have.

Custody visits

61. Perry Barr and Oldbury custody was visited on a weekly basis by custody visitors with only 1 visit being missed so far at Perry Barr due to a volunteer becoming unwell at the last minute. Telephone visits at Wolverhampton have worked well and will continue until volunteers feel that it is safe enough to resume visits in person. Custody visitors that usually visit Coventry and had to self-isolate will resume visits as of this month, after the majority of them were happy to carry out visits again in person.
62. Annex 1 gives a brief summary of some of the things reported by custody visitors and is broken down by custody suite.
63. TACT custody visitors (ICVs that visit PICs suspected of terrorism offences) were another group of volunteers who were unable to carry out visits in person, however work was done to implement telephone visits as an alternative and worked well when two TACT arrests took place in June. TACT custody visitors were able to report on the detention and provide a basic report which was then shared with the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism whose role is to scrutinise and report on terrorism legislation.
64. Reports from visits formed a weekly PCC update which was provided to volunteers throughout the crisis, informing them of the visits carried out and keeping them up-to-date with any vital news affecting the scheme or custody. It was a way of maintaining contact and communication with them, including those who were not actively visiting.
65. Updates/ concerns from visits were also fed through to the Covid-19 Stakeholder meetings which were held on a regular basis and consisted of partners within the Criminal Justice Services (CJS), chaired by West Midlands Police. Updates on the

schemes themselves were also shared in the office newsletter at least once a month as well.

66. Concerns especially around the additional pressure in custody by the virtual courts were fed back to the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) on a regular basis. They then in turn reported those concerns to the Home Office and the National Police Chief Council (NPCC). As a response, the Minister for Crime and Policing outlined some work that was underway to reduce pressure on police and police staff including support from Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) and confirmed that discussions were underway between the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).

Appropriate Adults

67. When it became clear that many of our volunteers who acted as Appropriate Adults for vulnerable adults in custody would have to self-isolate, there was uncertainty as to whether they could still continue their role remotely i.e. be present over the phone. Clarification was sought from the National Appropriate Association Network (NAAN), who confirmed that Appropriate Adults had to be present at certain stages of PACE procedures i.e. interview, searches, samples etc. and could not remotely act as an AA throughout all of the PACE procedures. AA visits would still need to take place in person for certain stages.
68. Although the majority of Appropriate Adults were unable to continue visits in person, there were at least a few volunteers who were willing and able to continue. The Commissioner personally wrote to thank those individuals for the work and support of the scheme during this time.
69. By July, AAs reported that some of them were being asked to attend Virtual Court Hearings as AAs for vulnerable detainees which they would not normally do. Asking AAs to attend court hearings in addition to the visits they were already carrying out would place too much of a strain on the limited list of volunteers who are working tirelessly to support the scheme under the present circumstances. In August, The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) managed to clarify from the Law Society and Home Office that an AA requested to attend court (be it in person or via virtual court) should be somebody with welfare responsibilities for the defendant. AAs like our own who simply provide services within custody do not have this responsibility and should not be in court.

Authors: Megan Jones, Sarah Gilbert, Sarah Matta, Imogen Cheatham

Annex 1

Wolverhampton

Staff morale was reported to be good with sufficient stock of PPE at all times. A dedicated cleaning company came in twice a day, cleaning and sanitizes cells, desks and areas used by detainees including transport vehicles. There was usually 1 Sgt and 2 DEOs on duty which was adequate given the small numbers of detainees held in custody. However, there was a concern that if the number of detainees increased, would the number of staff on duty suffice.

A nurse would triaged a PIC immediately on arrival and custody staff had minimal contact with detainees, who were offered hand sanitiser upon arrival. Detainees were then taken to their cell where they were offered a change of clothes with any questions asked through the hatch. Custody staff would wear PPE during any interaction with a detainee and half hour checks were completed. Donning and changing PPE each time. Contaminated PPE was then placed in bins to be destroyed.

There had been a number of solicitors unwilling to visit initially, so many consultations with detainees were done over the phone. This however changed over time, with some choosing to visit in person. Family members could act as AAs visiting the block at their own risk, on the condition of wearing PPE. However, visits were minimised as much as possible and there seemed overall, little need to request an AA.

Perry Barr

Reports from ICVs noted that staff were aware of the dangers and were taking the necessary precautions. Staff morale in the custody suite seemed buoyant and many appeared to be working calmly and were helpful and cooperative. Custody seemed calm and relaxed despite being busy at times. There were adequate numbers of staff on duty. By June though, there were reports of a shortage of staff Sergeants, with the need for more staff being essential. By July, ICVs reported that staff were being drafted in at the last minute to cover Oldbury due to staff shortages. Overtime staff were then being drafted into Perry Barr. It was noted that this created pressures on staff that had been transferred and at times it was reported that they were unable to take their breaks. Despite this, morale amongst staff appeared to be good during difficult times.

ICVs noted good coronavirus awareness and practices throughout the custody suite, with hand sanitiser, gloves and masks being offered to them upon arrival. Hand sanitiser was available at work stations and were offered to PICs on arrival including before an interview. However, ICVs reported that PICs were not routinely being offered soap or hand sanitiser but that they were available to them if they asked for it. Adequate stocks appeared to be available with a nightly stocktake of PPE undertaken. Cleaning of communal areas, interview/consultation rooms were being carried out almost hourly and two wings were closed off to keep them clean until needed. Transport vans were cleaned daily and deep

cleaned at weekends. Any detainee arriving with Covid type symptoms were immediately seen by a nurse in the police van and triaged before being booked in or moved to Wolverhampton if necessary. Wings C / D were noted to be busy because of additional demands transporting those on remand and observing social distancing. At times the custody block seemed to be busy due to morning court appearances, but there remained a calm atmosphere. There were no concerns reported about access to solicitors or appropriate adults. Video consultations with solicitors were available to detainees as many were still opting not to attend in person.

ICVs reported on numerous occasions that the virtual courts were having an impact on daily operations like cleaning and cell time/availability. By July, ICVs reported that virtual courts were adding pressure to custody staff. Delays in court hearings had placed time delays on actions to PIC's e.g. leaving the block. There was a dedicated Court Team from Monday – Saturday with their own Sergeant and Constable with the power to arrest. Transport to Court seemed to work well due to the reduced numbers. In August, ICVs noted how busy Perry Barr was with 18 virtual courts. There were sometimes delays to virtual courts due to the fact that solicitors were not generally talking to their clients before the 10.00 am deadline.

Other areas of concerns highlighted by ICVs were wash kits and detainees with mental health issues. There seemed to be an inconsistency of wash kits being offered to PICs, especially to those detained overnight. In general, it was felt by ICVs that a more proactive approach taken by the staff in offering PICs washing facilities rather than waiting for them to ask would be a better approach. Liaison & Diversion (L&D) teams continued to operate in the custody suite as normal and referrals to safe mental health facilities were being made subject to availability. It was evident though, that PICs with mental health issues continued to take up police time and resources.

Overall, ICVs felt that custody was being managed well and were satisfied that PICs were being treated fairly and reasonably. There was good practice of religious requirements being met during the month of Ramadan including making sure there were plenty of holy books and prayer mats available and stored/handled respectfully. One staff sergeant even created a prayer timetable and proactively made sure it was distributed to all the wings by the COA and that alarms had been set on the custody computer system to alert PICs at prayer times.

Oldbury

There were some inconsistencies when it came to ICVs being offered PPE at times. At the start of April, ICVs upon arrival to custody, had to ask for PPE. They also noted at the time that there was a lack of hand sanitisers around the suite due to no holders being available to put them in. It also seemed that PICs hadn't been offered any PPE, including soap which they would have to ask for. Further visits however seemed to report improvements, with ICVs noting that hand sanitiser, gloves and masks were now being offered to ICVs upon arrival. Regular cleaning of cells and equipment were witnessed taking place with cleaners seen to be active throughout the custody suite. There were sufficient stock of PPE and at least 1 or 2 wings were closed to keep them clean until needed.

Suspected COVID-19 detainees were being seen by Mountain Healthcare HCPs in police vans and redirected to Wolverhampton if necessary. Towards the end of June, Wolverhampton was no longer a designated custody suite for suspected Covid-19 detainees and instead, E wing at Oldbury became the new designated Covid wing. All court appearances were now being done virtually and there was a GEO Amey staff member on site to arrange any resulting transport requirements. Virtual courts were progressing well, however, a visit by ICVs at the beginning of September noted that some PICs had been in cells for a very long time due to court issues/ bank holiday.

In July, ICVs had reported during a visit that all of the wing officers were PCs on overtime, which was due to 6 staff vacancies. By August, it was reported that custody was very busy and the short-staffing was evident, PCs were still covering for absent wing officers and there was no duty inspector. A small number of staff appeared overwhelmed by the constant demands placed on them but, overall, ICVs felt that custody was functioning effectively.

There were no unreasonable delays with access to AAs and legal advice. All but one firm of solicitors were visiting in person, otherwise interviews were being carried out remotely using a dedicated mobile phone. As with Perry Barr, ICVs had reported that there were numerous PICs with mental health concerns, many waiting for a visit from the L&D team and mostly in custody for minor offences. It was clear that they were a heavy draw on resources.

There had been at least 2 visits whereby ICVs have either been dissuaded not to visit or a visit that had to be aborted after ICVs waited up to an hour to be escorted by an Inspector.

Unlike Perry Barr, Oldbury didn't seem to have prayer timetables readily available during Ramadan. It appeared that PICs needed to ask for prayer material rather than it being offered. Prayer time alarms were not being set.

Again, like Perry Barr, ICVs reported on a number of occasions that overnight PICs were not being offered wash kits. Three out of the four showers inspected were clean and dry which seem to suggest that they had been unused even though around 25 PICs had gone to court that morning. The position appeared to be that PICs would be given wash kits and showers only if they ask for them. In July, the Force had agreed to make amendments to the Rights and Entitlements booklet to include female hygiene products and wash kits after the issue was raised. The new leaflets were to be disturbed to all custody blocks.

In general, ICVs found the custody suite to be functioning well and that PICs were being treated fairly and reasonably.

Coventry

Staff welfare/morale seemed to be ok with staffing levels varying at times between 2 Sgts and 2/3 DEOs. Pre Covid-19 there were at least 3 Sgts and 3 staff, however, it was felt that there was adequate staff numbers on duty. There was a concern amongst staff that additional staff may be required if they had to help facilitate virtual visits. By May, staff numbers had been reduced after a member of staff was diagnosed with the Coronavirus and had to be hospitalised, while others were having to self-isolate. A comment was made that

Perry Barr felt much safer to work at due to the size and options of rotating wings, compared to Coventry which was smaller and limited in the numbers of wings they could use/rotate. By June, custody was increasingly getting busier.

PPE was being offered to all visitors like solicitors and appropriate adults and there was plenty of stock to last for a considerable amount of time, months in fact with stock checks carried out twice a week. Hand sanitisers were offered to detainees upon arrival unless they were being brought in for drink driving offences, which would make hand sanitisers inappropriate due to them containing alcohol. Cells and interview rooms were regularly wiped down/cleaned after use but this was having an effect on the amount of additional jobs staff had to undertake. Regular cleaning was taking place each morning with the option of requesting additional cleaning if necessary i.e. where detainee had dirtied cell in protest etc. Screens had been fitted at the charge desk to minimise risk but that there were some issues with them i.e. custody staff struggling to hear detainees through them.

Staff were confident in knowing the process to follow should a detainee be suspected of having Covid-19. Detainees brought in were asked assessment questions including questions around Covid-19. If there were any suspicions, the HCP would attend the yard/van area to assess detainees. By June, an AA visiting noted how busy the station had become, with staff struggling to cope with the number of PICs they are getting. There were only 3 interview rooms available with no space for private consultations except the exercise yard or using an interview room prior to interview. It was reported that some solicitors were attending in person but some were not, and were conducting consultations over the phone. There had been no issues in obtaining an AA for either an Adult or Juvenile. There was no concerns about detainees accessing Mental Health care.

In May, it was reported that there was an expectation from the courts that custody staff would run the virtual courts i.e. set up technology and organise. However, the Force felt that this was unworkable given the number of custody staff on duty and that GeoAmy should be responsible for this instead, however at the time they were refusing to do it. So there seemed to be a bit of a standstill with this. Plans were still being looked at in regards to how the virtual court at Coventry would work. Concerns were expressed about the number of staff that would be required to facilitate it.

By July, after a number of failed attempts to get some form of virtual visits set up using Zoom/Skype at Coventry custody, the decision was taken to look towards implementing telephone visits instead until a solution could be found.