

Guest Speaker input:

Meg Crook from the Integrated Non-Custodial Service Liaison and Diversion service (LADS – formally ASCC):

- The service runs 7 days a week from 8am – 8pm covering all 3 custody suites (Keynsham, Patchway & Bridgwater), along with Bristol Magistrates and Bristol Crown Court.
- The role is aimed to:
 - **Identify** individuals entering the justice system who have vulnerabilities, such as mental health issues, learning disabilities, substance misuse, autism, or acquired brain injuries.
 - **Screen and assess** these individuals early (in custody or court) to understand their needs and urgency.
 - **Refer and support** them into appropriate treatment, social care, and rehabilitation services, with follow-up to help them engage with these supports and improve outcomes.
 - **Inform criminal justice decisions** by providing the police, probation, courts, and judiciary with assessment insights (with consent) to influence arrest, bail, sentencing, and remand decisions.
- Effective working relationships have been built with the custody staff allowing for honest and frank conversations to be had.
- Meetings with the police occur daily to discuss each detainee to discuss a safe exit release plan for the individual when they leave custody.
- The backbone of funding comes from NHS England commissioning, supplemented by national grants from the Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office, with a growing shift toward co-commissioning with police or local partners for enhanced integration and sustainability.
- When a juvenile is in custody, although prioritised, they would have often left the unit before being seen by LADS, as the idea is for them not to be in custody for long periods of time. However, when they are seen, the custody record will be updated to reflect this. ICVs as part of their visits, are more than welcome to check whether a juvenile has been seen and that the appropriate pathways have been recommended/discussed.
- LADS staff always welcome ICVs approaching them to ask any questions they may have.
- A normal LADS assessment takes 3-4hrs per individual.
- LADS cannot comment on whether a detainee has capacity or not or whether they are fit for interview, this is where the HCPs step in.
- LADS are able to screen each person without having their consent; however, the HCPs need to get consent.
- The name changed from ASCC due to other umbrellas that assist and help those through the criminal justice system. The Nelson Trust being one of the other parties, will attend custody to see female detainees and will often make contact with them once they have left. They run Project SHE (information here: [Project SHE \(Support, Help, and Engagement\) | Centre for Justice Innovation](#)).

Police Custody Updates:

- Supt. Dan Ashfield is now in post, and this is his first week. Dan's background consists of a career in Wiltshire prior to moving to Avon and Somerset. He has worked on Investigations, Patrol and Neighbourhood Policing. Dan has run a proactive team for several years and recently gone through the promotion process. In terms of line management within a custody setting, this is all new to Dan, but he has spoken to the previous Head of Custody (Sam Kayser) at length prior to starting this role. He is

spending time visiting staff across the 3 sites. Dan commented that he was very excited about this role and plans to be in post for at least a couple of years, wants to make a difference and help promote the good work that happens in custody.

- DO posts are in a good position currently, the next DO course is in January 2026. There are some current abstractions due to sickness.
- There are currently 59 sergeants across the 3 units and currently carrying 11 vacancies in this area. There has been a recent paper sift for a custody only process to fill these gaps. There is a Board process in August, the sergeant's course thereafter is in October for 4 weeks which will be followed by a tutorship. Operating at 80% resource effective which is not ideal, but it has been worse historically.
- Have had a small increase in the number of S.136 detainees in custody, can be challenging as it's not the best environment for someone with mental health issues.
- HCP wise, Warwickshire have sped up on their vetting, so recruitment, although ongoing, spaces are being filled. Keynsham have 4 full time equivalents, but one is due to go on maternity leave. Bridgwater has 4 HCPs and another going through vetting, and Patchway has 5. There are 12 on the HCP on the Bank and 2 on the Regional Bank. Ruth from MITIE working very hard in the background to ensure staffing levels are adequate across the 3 sites.
- The HCPs in Avon and Somerset are doing the equivalent work that Devon and Cornwall HCPs are doing, yet they have double the number of staff. This is something that is being investigated. Another issue HCPs face is the duplication of work in having to input onto several databases, again, this is something that is being looked at.
- Each of the units now have new bins specifically for recycling. There is still some cross contamination occurring with the recycling, however, there is a push to make sure everyone is aware of it. It's an ongoing process.
- For information, the average time someone will spend in custody is approx. 14 hours. Sergeants will often inform detainees of this so that they are aware.
- The new vulnerable cell doors that were placed into custody have resulted in a 7.8% reduction in level 4 observations.
- Metal Detectors – this was mentioned at the last meetings and the business case for these machines has been granted. The case is currently with procurement. Work is ongoing in relation to installing the required sockets for the machines. A machine will be based at each custody suite. Other forces use them, and the success rate is huge! This will not only negate the need for intimate searching but also improve officer safety. There will be communications about these machines in due course.
- A reminder of the observation levels used in custody:

Level 1 – General Observation

- Checks every hour, quietly and sensitively.
- Detainees can sleep uninterrupted unless risk changes.
- Suitable for those deemed low risk.

Level 2 – Intermittent Observation

- Checks and rousing every 30 minutes, supported by CCTV.
- For individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or with low consciousness.

Level 3 – Constant Observation

- Continuous observation via CCTV, with physical checks at least every 30 minutes.
- For detainees at heightened risk (e.g., self-harm, serious vulnerability). Staff also communicate frequently.

Level 4 – Close Proximity Observation

- Officer physically present at the cell door or inside, ready for immediate intervention.
- Reserved for those at the highest risk of self-harm or suicide.

ICV Questions/Concerns:

- A question was asked about children in custody; Norfolk recently received a Home Office Grant to install some new graphics, screens and child friendly cells as part of a trial of 'nudge theory'. This means in practice that there are graphics on the walls and the ceiling of each cell regarding making positive changes for detainees in terms of employment, goal setting, mental health support and more, to help 'nudge' detainees to speak to Liaison and Diversion during their time in custody. They also had specific child-friendly cells, which have an area on the wall for drawing, targets for use with foam footballs and extra text above the cell bells to remind and encourage rights and entitlements. Have ASP looked at applying something like this?
 - *ASP = We are already ahead of other forces in this area. We attended a conference 2 weeks ago, whereby this came up. We have already implemented things like toys, the balls outside. Looking at getting targets to hit etc.*

- Cumbria have adopted a booklet aimed at individuals with ADHD detained in custody created by 'ADHDers for ADHDers' and it's available to police custody suites. The booklet provides information about ADHD and the legal rights including information around appropriate adults and reasonable adjustments. Is ASP going to adopt something similar?
 - *ASP = We started neurodiverse work in custody in terms of the painting etc., a while back and have had some really good training which has cascaded through with new people. We are looking to revisit again but down to the budget we haven't yet. A lot of the things in the ADHD booklet, we already have in place. One of the HCPs in Bridgwater brought this book to the table – ASP looked into it. We don't automatically hand out a booklet on ADHD, but if people state that they have ADHD then they will be given a copy of the information in relation to ADHD in custody.*

- A question keeps coming up from DOs to ICVs about a low tap being installed for people who need to wash their feet as part of their religion. We discussed this at a previous meeting, but wondered if DOs could be notified that this cannot be done due to the cost and work involved?
 - *ASP = Staff will be spoken with about this and it has also been queried with us. The cost and work that would go into fitting this is not feasible, and the showers are sufficient enough for detainees to wash themselves if required.*

OPCC update:

- **Clare Moody** is incredibly ambitious and as such, has taken on 2 national portfolios and is leading with other OPCC's on VAWG (Violence against Women and Girls) and children and young persons. Clare is also looking to drive this locally and it forms part of her Police and Crime Plan.
- **Summer Initiative:** there is an initiative happening this summer around keeping town centres safe. This is OPCC led and is looking at tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) etc. There are several areas across Avon and Somerset where the level of offending has increased (e.g. Gloucester Rd, Fishponds) and we are looking at a number of interventions through policing and working with community groups/local authorities to try and reduce criminality and make the summer months more bearable.
- **Deputy PCC:** Clare is seeking to appoint a Deputy PCC and there will be a confirmation hearing held in a couple of weeks' time. Alongside this, our current CEO is on long term sick, so there is also the need to appoint a temporary CEO – also happening in the next couple of weeks.
- **V2 of the Custody app** - ready to test, looking to arrange a meeting in the coming weeks with the coordinators across the 3 sites to test/ask questions.
- **Recruitment:** We are currently in the throes of the recruitment process and interviewing over the course of the next few weeks for all 3 sites. We look to have good numbers, and we shall keep you updated on the next stages once interviews/offers for candidates have taken place.
- **Reporting:** When updating the staffing levels – please remember to update whether there was an Inspector on site or working remotely. When completing reports, if a visit has been made to a cell – even if no issues raised, please document this on the system.

- **QAF: Quality Assurance Framework;** this is now live! We are currently reviewing and working through and would like to improve on our last rating a couple of years ago which was Code Compliant. Aiming for Silver or Gold – lots of work to do and will keep you posted as we go through!
- **Training:** We appreciate all you currently do for the scheme and in order to keep your skillset going, there is some training that we would like you to complete produced by ICVA (Independent Custody Visiting Association), this will take up to 3hrs and there is a workbook to complete and send back to us as part of it. The training is An Introduction to Racism in Custody and Policing. The training will be made up of videos, and some typed answers. We will look to roll this out imminently. We would be extremely grateful if you could complete this training, thank you! More details in due course.

Next Meeting:

Thursday 6th of November 2025, 10:00-14:00hrs, Ashmead Room, Keynsham Custody Unit

Actions:

Number	Action	Responsibility	Completed Y/N
1	K'Sham have offered ICVs to shadow a custody shift. Keeness around this. Also the same for Patchway - need to link with ICVs and Bill in order to arrange	RM/DD	
2	Collation of staffing levels - start to visualise - reminder to ICVs to also include Inspector levels and if they are working remotely	DD	Ongoing
3	Increase ICV levels across the 3 sites	BM/DD	Ongoing Recruitment in process
4	Establish why ASP aren't getting notifications of ICV visit reports	BM/DD	
5	Reminder to ICVs to include Insp. levels when noting staffing levels	DD	
6	Reminder in minutes about the observation levels	DD	
7	Closed session to be included on future ICV meetings	BM/DD	
8	At the next meetings - ASP to run through a custody record (perhaps one where questions have been raised as part of a visit)	BM/DD	
9	When ICVs completing their reports, to tag when there is an issue (e.g. request for food on arrival of ICVs) then tick as resolved if dealt with there and then. This will provide clear detail if there are emerging patterns/concerns.	BM/DD	
10	Send ICV report to HOC for him to review/see what it looks like	BM/DD	
11	Can stretchy lids be used to cover the tea/coffee/sugar - OPCC to liaise with Bill H about this	BM/DD	
12	Revamp of the reporting sheet used by ICVs	ICVs/OPCC	
13	Presentation to be delivered in November on stats in custody	ASP	
14	Can ear defenders be supplied to DPs that are neurodiverse and weighted blankets? OPCC to liaise with Bill H	BM/DD	