

RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF DEVON, CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY TO THE HMICFRS and HMI PRISONS JOINT INSPECTION REPORT INTO DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE CUSTODY

Chief Constable's comments

In May 2019 Devon and Cornwall Police were inspected by HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services). This was a comprehensive and rigorous two-week multi-agency inspection across every facet of custody. The report highlighted that:

'The force displayed a particularly strong culture of treating detainees with care and consideration throughout our inspection and detainees' welfare interests were at the forefront throughout.'

The report highlighted only one cause for concern relating the need for accurate data. The force is already working to improve this and HMICFRS have stated they are confident Devon and Cornwall Police will act appropriately to address this area.

This is a very positive report and is a reflection of the hard work of our custody staff, supported by partners. Whilst there is always an opportunity for improvement, the report highlights the positive progress Devon and Cornwall Police have made in recent years.

Devon and Cornwall Police have installed OxyHealth life-signs monitors in custody. These monitors allow health care professionals to monitor the breathing rate and heart rate of detainees in custody. This is a first for any police force in the world. Further investments have been made in a new, state-of-the-art police station and custody centre in Exeter.

Devon and Cornwall Police are proud to be leading the world with some of the safety equipment that we have installed in our custody. Treating those in custody with dignity, care and respect is not only ethical and the right thing to do, but is more likely to influence positive outcomes for victims and witnesses.

Police & Crime Commissioner's comments

I welcome this report which thoroughly examined all areas of police custody in Devon and Cornwall. The findings of the joint inspection are largely positive and illustrate the good leadership demonstrated by senior officers and the commitment and professionalism by staff and officers to provide safe and respectful treatment to detainees.

Police custody in Devon and Cornwall has come under intense scrutiny in recent years. It is essential that the public's confidence in police custody is maintained and this report provides an independent reassurance that the way that Devon and Cornwall Police provide this service is both well managed and providing a high standard environment for detainees. This goes to the heart of our justice system which is founded on the presumption of innocent until proven guilty.

I am particularly pleased that the Inspectors recognise the valuable contribution made by the external scrutiny managed by my office through the Independent Custody Visitors. This scheme provides for members of the public to attend police custody facilities to check upon the welfare of detainees. Any issues observed during these visits are reported to the Force. In May this year, the Devon and Cornwall ICV Scheme received a national quality assurance award at a ceremony at the House of Lords.

The provision of custody services will be enhanced further in the coming months with the opening of a new Police Station and Custody Centre in Exeter which is scheduled to open in early 2020. This will provide a 40 cell custody unit has been developed to comply with the latest Ministry of Justice Design Guide standards and will incorporate the latest technology to provide for the safety and security for detainees and staff.

There are some areas for improvement highlighted by the Inspectorates and I shall be maintaining a close oversight of the Force action plan to deliver these changes.



Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

4th November 2019