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Martyn Underhill  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset  
Force HQ  
Winfrith  
Wool  
Dorchester DT2 8DZ

Dear Martyn

### **Detainee Dignity in Police Custody**

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to make you aware of an issue that has been identified from inspectorate reports. ICVA reviews all joint inspectorate reports on police custody (from 2015 to present day). The Inspectorate frequently reports that detainees of both genders are unjustifiably left naked or inappropriately clothed in police custody. Clearly, this compromises their dignity and mental wellbeing. I am sure you will agree this is not acceptable.

In total, ICVA has reviewed 29 inspectorate reports from 2015–2017 to investigate the nature and scope of the potential problem.

### **Evidence Base**

Inspection methodology dictates that inspectors will only see a snapshot of custody for the time that they are present in suites. Therefore, from the evidence base used, a true size of the scale of the issues with detainee dignity is impossible to determine, but is likely to be much higher.

The overarching areas of concern from the 29 reports examined are as follows:

- Leaving detainees naked in cell (at least 8 instances)
- Clothing removal and/or strip searches taking place with members of opposite gender present (at least 13 instances)
- Clothing removal and/or strip searches taking place able to be viewed on CCTV
- Removal of clothes and placing detainees in anti-rip clothing inappropriately

Of the 29 reports examined, ICVA has identified one or more of the above issues in 24 of these reports to varying degrees. For your information, the inspection report in your area contained no evidence of bad practice in this area other than a recorded concern of unauthorised strip search.

ICVA notes that the over use of anti-rip suits has been reported to the PACE Strategy Group by our colleagues in HMICFRS.

Inspectorate reports are clear on all counts that the use of anti-rip clothing should be managed based on individual risk assessment of self-harm. The Inspectorate takes the view, as we do, that they should not be used simply because a detainee is difficult, or as replacement clothing. Equally, force should not be used routinely in order to 'place' someone into an anti-rip suit.

Detainee dignity should be held in high regard by forces.

In summary, these reports indicate poor management of the risk of self-harm which is highly likely to be detrimental to the wellbeing of vulnerable detainees. Furthermore, they illustrate a lack of due regard for detainee privacy and dignity which gives rise to concerns over compliance with Human Rights articles.

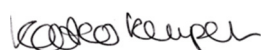
ICVA has raised the issue with the NPCC Lead for Custody, ACC Nev Kemp. The National Custody Forum considered this matter at its recent meeting.

Additionally, ICVA has recently responded to consultations by both HMIP and the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorates. In both, we asked the monitoring bodies to undertake a thematic piece of work regarding the issues outlined above and suggested a title of 'Managing risk of self-harm and detainee dignity in police custody'.

ICVA will also produce a briefing for its schemes and Custody Visitors regarding detainee dignity and nudity.

Finally, in closing, as Police and Crime Commissioner, you may wish to undertake an exercise in your area to ensure that detainee dignity is front and centre of all custody suites.

Yours sincerely



Katie Kempen  
ICVA Chief Executive