



9 June 2021

**POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER RESPONSE TO THE HMICFRS REPORT:  
'CUSTODY SERVICES IN A COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT'**

This report outlines the way in which police custody services were being provided during the Covid-19 pandemic last year. It is pleasing to see that the majority of findings in the report have been positive and recognise the current difficulties faced in custody and the wider criminal justice system that custody staff work within.

The police have had a very difficult job over the last year, ensuring that services are provided to the public in a 'business as usual' fashion, whilst also ensuring that full protection is provided to the public, as well as officers and staff, against the virus threat. The custody environment is one in which members of the public may be detained for many hours at a time, and naturally there will be times when close contact is unavoidable during detention. This has been a challenge for officers during the period. In South Wales I believe the force acted from an early point to ensure measures were in place to deal with the threats.

South Wales Police was one of the forces visited as part of this inspection. I was pleased that the manager of my Independent Custody Visiting Scheme was consulted as part of this process and that we were able to feed in our views on the positive way in which custody has responded to the challenges.

The report has found that all custody services inspected largely continued as usual during the pandemic and that forces planned and prepared well to act on the various health and safety requirements it posed. During 2020, members of my own team worked with our Independent Custody Visitors to establish a contingency plan for continuing unannounced checks of custody. This included our volunteer custody visitors and staff from my team making unannounced telephone calls to custody where physical visits were no longer possible. In addition, my team made regular checks of custody records. During their enquiries they ensured that questions about Covid-19 measures were asked.

## Rt Hon Alun Michael JP OStJ FRSA

Comisiynydd yr Heddlu a Throseddau De Cymru  
Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales



My team were assured during this period that in South Wales Police custody services, the public and our officers were being protected as far as possible from Covid. I am pleased to see that these findings are duplicated in this report.

I support the report's recommendations around recording however, and am already working with the force to address some of these points.

The Chief Constable responds to the content of the report as below:

*'South Wales Police acknowledges and supports the findings of this report and continues to work with partners to ensure the safety of detainees and staff at all times within the custody environment. During the pandemic, staff within the four custody suites have maintained a safe environment for all those who work in the suites as well as detainees and their legal representation. Custody staff continue to monitor the safety of all those who enter the custody suite, and have protocols in place for those who have, or are suspected of having, COVID-19.'*

*Throughout the pandemic, the force has worked with Local Health Boards, custody referral agencies and Her Majesty's Court Service, to ensure that officers and detainees were provided with the necessary support required during this time, and that court hearings continued to run efficiently and effectively during these difficult times.*

*The force remains committed to providing a high standard of care and service to all those who work in, and visit, the custody environment and have taken on board the findings from the HMICFRS report as part of its commitment to improving the service provided to our communities'.*

I will continue to do this whilst also considering the implementation of the report recommendations.

**Rt Hon Alun Michael**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales**

---

Ty Morgannwg, Pencadlys yr Heddlu  
Pen-y-Bont ar Ogwr, CF31 3SU  
f: 01656 869366  
e: [commissioner@heddlu-de-cymru.pnn.police.uk](mailto:commissioner@heddlu-de-cymru.pnn.police.uk)  
g: [southwalescommissioner.org.uk](http://southwalescommissioner.org.uk)

Ty Morgannwg, Police Headquarters,  
Bridgend, CF31 3SU  
t: 01656 869366  
e: [commissioner@south-wales.pnn.police.uk](mailto:commissioner@south-wales.pnn.police.uk)  
w: [southwalescommissioner.org.uk](http://southwalescommissioner.org.uk)

Mae'r Comisiynydd a'i dîm yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg  
The Commissioner and his team welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English