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POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Surrey Police Management of Custody Closures

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform the PCC of the circumstances that led to the closure of three out of the four custody centres operating overnight Friday 1st November into Saturday 2nd November 2013 and to address the concerns raised by the Deputy PCC, Mr Harris' email of Monday 4th November 2013.

Current Position

Since the 4th November 2013 Surrey Police now operates three large custody centres, located at Staines, Guildford and Salfords. Each centre is managed by an Inspector, with responsibility for eleven custody sergeants and twenty five Designated Detention Officers (DDOs). The optimum level of staffing for each custody centre is 2 x Sergeants and 5 x DDOs per shift with a minimum staffing level of 1 x Sgt and 3 x DDOs per shift.

The custody staff are directly responsible for observing and supervising detainees and undertake a level of training as set out in the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Guidance for the Detention and Custody of persons. They should be aware of the risks that have been identified, and the purpose of the allocated level of supervision that is deemed necessary. They have to remain vigilant and be able to identify the signs or behaviours of a detainee that may indicate that there is an increased level of risk and/or requirement for a higher level of monitoring which can fluctuate throughout the period of their detention. Therefore the request to close a custody centre is a subjective one which is based on the risk around the detainees in custody, versus staff: prisoner ratio.

Staines Custody Centre (19 cells)

On Saturday 2nd November 2013 Staines custody centre (cell capacity 19) had thirteen prisoners in custody managed by 1 x PS and 2 x DDOs. The team were operating one DDO below minimum resourcing and due to prisoner: staff ratio the Sergeant requested

authority from the Force Control Room (FCR) Inspector to close at 04:42hrs, which was granted and re-opened at 07:00hrs that morning. Staines custody centre remained closed for a total time of 2 hours 18 minutes.

Woking Custody Centre (15 cells)

On Saturday 2nd November 2013 Woking custody centre (cell capacity 15) had thirteen prisoners in custody managed by 1 x Sgt and 3 x DDOs. The Sergeant requested authority to close based on the prisoner: staff ratio and this was authorised by the FCR Inspector, closing at 04:40hrs re-opening at 08:12hrs that morning. Woking remained closed for a total time of 3 hours 32 minutes.

Reigate Custody Centre (12 cells)

Reigate had 12 detainees and reached full cell capacity by 01:31hrs on Saturday 2nd November 2013. The staff ratio at Reigate was 1 x Sergeant and 3 x DDOs. The centre closed at 01:31 hrs and re-opened just before 0900hrs that morning, following the release of one detainee.

Guildford Custody Centre (24 cells)

At 05.06hrs on Saturday 2nd November 2013, Guildford Custody Centre had 13 prisoners managed by two Sergeants and 2 x DDOs (should have been 5 x DDOs). Unfortunately the team went below minimum resourcing due to one detention officer suffering an injury at work and the other DDO was diverted to support Reigate. The custody Sergeant contacted the FCR Inspector to request authorisation to close due to staff: prisoner ratio. The FCR Inspector explained that the three other centres were closed and it was then agreed that Guildford would remain open. Two prisoners were diverted from Staines and were booked into custody between 0500hrs and 0600hrs that morning. This confirms that persons arrested during the closure period were accommodated at Guildford, therefore the need for mutual aid support from neighbouring forces was averted.

Post Incident Review

A post incident review has resulted in the following changes and recommendations:

- There is now a minimum of five Sergeants and 12 x DDOs working per shift covering the three custody centres.

- The duty management processes for the allocation of custody duties has been reviewed and local managers are required to manage the abstraction process through a seven day forecast in liaison with the force duty management team with oversight by the Custody Chief Inspector.
- There are an additional twenty eight custody trained reserve Sergeants eligible for duties and they are being allocated a minimum of six duties over a twelve month period in support of the custody teams that assists them to maintain their accreditation as a custody officer.
- A proposal has been submitted to the ACC Senior Management Team (SMT) for ratification that all response Sergeants should be trained as custody officers, so that during periods of fluctuating demand they can be allocated to support custody as and when required. This practice is already operating in the Metropolitan Police Service.
- A revised custody closure escalation plan has been agreed, that provides a higher level of supervision from Inspector up Surrey Police duty Gold Commander (ACPO or Chief Superintendent) to actively manage custody closures and support staff to deliver a safe and efficient custody environment, that includes the ability to secure additional cell provision from neighbouring forces, as experienced previously on 5th October 2013 where all four custody centres were approaching capacity.
- A performance management framework for custody is being developed with the Force Analysis Unit to include custody closures and frequency, waiting times for booking in of detainees and management of bail. The force customer services manager is also devising an internal custody user's questionnaire sponsored by the Criminal Justice SMT to better understand the blockers and enablers within the custody environment with the objective to improve overall performance.
- Woking Custody is now permanently closed/mothballed and cannot be opened at short notice due to custody staffing levels across the force. However, it is ready for use for pre-planned activity days, provided custody resource is planned in advance.

In conclusion, on 2nd November 2013 Surrey Police did not have all custody centres closed, although the force was near cell capacity. The force has an escalation plan in place to manage custody closures and is investing in additional training of custody staff to ensure resilience. This approach will enable the force to deliver the People's Priorities within the PCC Police and Crime Plan, whilst providing a safe and efficient custody environment for all.