



Phase 5b of the ‘Good’ Police Custody Study - Putting recommendations into practice in two police force areas: An evaluation study

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Summary

This Phase 5b implementation and evaluation project took place in September-December 2021 in Force B and in October-December 2021 in Force C. This entailed five key dignity-related measures being implemented in tests sites, Pennilworth (B) and Monkton (C), with quantitative data being collected pre- and post-implementation in the test and comparator sites, Carford (B), and Roseford (C), to examine the outcome of the implementation measures on perceptions of dignity. This was accompanied by a qualitative process evaluation in the test site during the implementation periods to examine the implementation process. The five measures implemented were: handover sheets, custody information leaflets/posters (see the [‘good’ police custody project page](#)), good practice example sheets, discretionary decisions about personal effects and routine access to various material goods. An identical project, Phase 5a, was undertaken in Force A in November-December 2020 (see Skinns et al. 2021b). In order to interpret the data from Phase 5b, the present report draws on findings from Phase 5a, as well as Phase 3 of the ‘good’ police custody study.

The challenges of researching in police custody in Phase 5b meant that staff and detainee participant numbers were not as high expected. This limited what the research was able to say about the outcomes of the implementation process, and greater reliance has therefore been placed on the process evaluation and staff and detainee descriptions of the implementation measures and their value.

Key findings:

- The survey data from Phases 3, 5a and 5b showed that being a site trialling the dignity-related implementation measures did not lead to an above average score on dignity-related items in the staff or detainee survey. In the staff data, Carford (comparator site) was the only above average suite, but it was not one where the implementation work had taken place. However, Roseford (comparator site), Brightfields (test site) and Monkton (test site) were only just outside of the above average range. Highpoint (comparator site) and Pennilworth (test site) scored amongst the lowest with respect to staff perceptions of treating detainees with dignity. This might explain some of the challenges with the implementation work, particularly in Pennilworth.
- Across all three forces in Phase 5a and 5b, there was some reluctance to engage with the project. In Force A, this was because staff felt that they “did dignity already”. In Force B, however, staff saw the project as having been foisted on them and were dissatisfied with particular measures such as the handover sheet (see below). In Force C, there was a sense of staff malaise and burn-out and that there needed to have been in-person rather than digital communications about the project, with critical information (e.g. about implementation measures) being missed as a result.
- In terms of perceptions of the implementation measures, as a whole, staff in Force A attempted to implement them and mostly appreciated their value. Staff in Force B attempted to implement them, but did not always appreciate their value, with staff particularly disliking the handover sheet, which was therefore revised back to the version they had used prior to the project commencing. In Force C, staff had not fully attempted to implement the required measures, meaning the researcher had to ask about current practices with respect to these measures and hypothetical questions about whether staff would value them had they been implemented.
- Of the five implementation measures, from the outset, one was not taken up at all in Forces A, B or C (the good practice example sheet), whilst another was implemented to a very limited extent (the handover sheet), even though changes were made to try to encourage take up in Forces A and B.
- Some of the other implementation measures had already been adopted to some extent prior to the implementation and evaluation work taking place. At the time of the research, Force A already had a formal policy on staff discretion in decisions about detainee’s personal effects, a handover sheet and distraction items, which provide one possible explanation of why staff felt that “we do dignity already”. In Force B, there was already a custody information leaflet for detainees and they had previously trialled fidget toys and other distraction items.

- Therefore, the *detainee information sheets* were valued the most in Force A and C (even if they were not routinely provided in Force C), for example, because of the condensed information they provided which would be of particular use to those arrested for the first time and which were used in some cases by detainees in Force A to request further support. They were not valued as much in Force B, largely because of a similar custody information leaflet already in use, which staff felt was superior to the one used in the project, for example, because it contained additional information about meals.
- With regard to discretionary case-by-case *decision-making about detainees keeping personal effects* in the cells, the research found that staff in Force A, had taken “baby steps” towards implementing this change. They saw that the keeping of personal effects, such as wedding bands, watches, hair bobbles and stress beads could help de-escalate situations and prevent the use of force by the police to retrieve these items.
- By contrast, in Force B, limited effort had been taken to alter what staff usually did with regard to decisions about detainees’ keeping any personal effects in the cells. Instead, staff here continued to take a cautious approach to these decisions, emphasising perceived detainee risk over detainee dignity. In Force C, staff, on the whole, removed all personal effects and had not attempted to implement changes, albeit for different reasons to in Force B. As a result, detainees in Force B and C were puzzled and sometimes upset about why personal effects (e.g. spectacles) had been removed, when they did not consider themselves to be a self-harm risk and would be allowed these items in prison. They also wished for more explanation from the police about why their personal effects were being removed.
- The *handover sheet* was not implemented in Force C and only implemented to a limited extent in Force A and B. Staff in Force B were especially dissatisfied with it largely because of practical difficulties with using it (e.g. the font was too small, the colour coding was different to what they were used to) and also because of differing expectations about its purpose. Staff in Force B, for example, saw the handover sheet as an important tool for communicating information about risk to the incoming shift, whilst the project had intended for this communication to extend also to detainee dignity.
- *Reading, writing materials and other distraction items*, were on their way in Force A towards becoming routinely provided to detainees, if appropriate, based on perceptions of detainee risk, though also sometimes limited by the availability of resources and staff availability to provide them. Force B had a good supply of distraction items and would provide them if they could. Staff saw the benefits of soft footballs and books, but less so colouring and writing materials, Poppits, Rubik’s Cubes, fidget spinners etc., with decisions about whether to provide them being shaped by the perceived “trustworthiness” of detainees. In Force C, distraction items were mainly limited to books, colouring materials and writing materials, with limited availability of these items and limited attempts to provide them, bar telling detainees on booking-in that they may request them.

In terms of continuing to grow the focus of staff on detainee dignity it is recommended that:

- Standardised custody information leaflets be provided in the future across England and Wales.
- In the longer-term, these custody information leaflets should be made more accessible for a wider range of detainees.
- A widely shared online repository is created for evidence-informed critical information for detainees, including information leaflets of the kind used in this project.
- Decisions about the keeping of personal effects should continue to be taken on a case-by-case basis.
- The *routine* provision of material items, including distraction items should also continue into the future and staff should have the necessary resources to enable this to happen.
- To further encourage below average suites to become above average, staff should be encouraged to increase their focus on detainee dignity (e.g. through custody information leaflets, distraction items

and case-by-case decisions about detainee personal effects, as well as shared learning between forces through training).

Introduction

Between 2013 and 2018, a research team collected a range of data, as part of an ESRC-funded “‘Good’ police custody? Theorizing the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’”, hereafter referred to as the GPCS. The primary aim of the research was to robustly examine what is meant by ‘good’ police custody. These data have been used to explore preliminary ideas about good police custody (Skinns et al., 2015) and the importance of detainee dignity (Skinns et al., 2020), the delivery of police custody (Skinns et al., 2017a), staff-detainee interactions and the use of ‘soft’ power (Skinns et al., 2017b), detainees’ emotional reactions to police custody (Wooff and Skinns, 2017), the pains of police detention (Skinns and Wooff, 2020), as well as police-academic partnerships during research on police custody (Greene and Skinns, 2017) and the use of appreciative inquiry in police custody research (Skinns et al, 2021a).

In Phase 3 of the research, in 2016-17, the research team surveyed nearly 800 staff and detainees in 27 custody facilities in 13 police forces. These data were used in Phase 4 of the research to formulate good practice recommendations, which were launched in October 2019. It was recommended that dignity - linked to equal worth, autonomy and decency - should be priorities that police custody practitioners, managers, national leads and policy makers should take account of in relation to the operation and strategic direction of police custody, alongside existing priorities such as safety, security, risk, cost effectiveness and the demands of the law and the criminal justice process. It was also recognised that such changes may yield benefits for detainees and for staff, through increased detainee cooperation, for example. In pursuit of these goals, it was recommended that changes be made to police attitudes and behaviours; policies, training and line management procedures; detainee expectations; and the material conditions of police custody.

From September 2019, work began on Phase 5 of the GPCS, in which the research team facilitated the implementation of these recommendations in a small number of police forces, who volunteered to take part. The two main aims of this project were to:

1. Facilitate the implementation of the good practice recommendations derived from the good police custody in up to six police force areas (though this aim had to be scaled back to three forces due to the effects of Covid-19);
2. Evaluate the impact of the uptake of these recommendations on police officers’ experiences, and on their attitudes and behaviours towards detainees, as well as on the experiences of detainees.

This phase of research was therefore concerned with making changes to police custody practices and to the experiences of detainees, and to measure the extent of this impact and the process by which this impact came about. These changes were based on good practice recommendations from the GPCS. Here we report on findings from the implementation and evaluation process in two of these police forces, Force B and C, with the findings from Force A being presented in an earlier report (see Skinns et al., 2021b). In Phase 5b, the project took place in two suites in Force B from 17 September to 5 December 2021 and in two suites in Force C from 4 October to 12 December 2021. In order to maintain anonymity, in Force B, the suites have been given the pseudonyms, Pennilworth (test site) and Carford (comparator site) and in Force C they have been given the pseudonyms, Monkton (test site) and Roseford (comparator site). For ease of reference, we refer to the implementation and evaluation work conducted in Forces B and C as Phase 5b, thereby differentiating it from similar work carried in Force A in 2020, which is referred to as Phase 5a.

This report has three main purposes:

1. To describe the implementation and evaluation methods employed in Force B and C in Phase 5b of the GPCS (comparing this to experiences in Force A in Phase 5a);
2. Critically examine the (perceived) effectiveness of the measures implemented;

3. Set out recommendations for future practice and for subsequent development of the implementation measures used in Phase 5b.

Implementation and evaluation methods

In Phase 5b, the custody suite in which the measures were being implemented Pennilworth (Force B) and Monkton (Force C) were compared before and after implementing the recommendations from the research with comparator sites Carford (Force B) and Roseford (Force C), where no measures were implemented. The research was conducted in four stages to fit around the implementation work.

In Force B:

- Stage 1: Pre-implementation staff and detainee quantitative survey in Pennilworth and Carford (17-25 September 2021);
- Stage 2: Brief staff survey using open and closed questions in Pennilworth and Carford in response to 'I am Human' animation (4-12 October 2021), which was used to create a good practice examples sheet;
- Implementation work in Pennilworth (18 October-12 November 2021);
- Stage 3: Process evaluation in Pennilworth (3-5 November 2021), involving semi-structured interviews with staff and detainees and participant observation;
- Stage 4: Post-implementation quantitative survey in Pennilworth and Carford (24 November - 5 December 2021).

In Force C:

- Stage 1: Pre-implementation staff and detainee quantitative survey in Monkton and Roseford (4-15 October 2021);
- Stage 2: Brief staff survey using open and closed questions in Monkton and Roseford in response to 'I am Human' animation (18-26 October 2021), which was used to create a good practice examples sheet;
- Implementation work in Monkton (1-26 November 2021);
- Stage 3: Process evaluation in Monkton (19-21 November 2021), involving semi-structured interviews with staff and detainees and participant observation;
- Stage 4: Post-implementation quantitative survey in Monkton and Roseford (1-12 December 2021).

During the implementation stage, staff were asked to give greater overall emphasis to detainee dignity in all that they did, recognising that every interaction matters. In particular, staff were asked to:

- Adopt a new handover sheet with dignity as a standing item.
- Offer custody information sheets to all detainees and to display custody information posters in the custody suite in places where detainees were likely to spend time looking at them e.g. in the holding area, consultation rooms, fingerprint rooms.
- Make use of a good practice examples sheet to guide their day-to-day practices and their discussions during handover. This sheet was developed from the Stage 2 survey, in order to give staff a sense of ownership over the project.
- Give greater consideration to dignity in decisions about the keeping of personal effects, risk assessments permitting (staff were to discuss these decisions with managers if they were unsure)

- Enable *routine* access to various material goods (e.g. reading and writing materials, other distraction box items, blankets, food and drinks, range of clothing)

In terms of the data collection tools, the Stage 1 and 4 questionnaire was adapted from the GPCS questionnaire used in Phase 3 of the research in 2016-17, adding questions about the material conditions of police custody and about detainee socio-demographic information. Otherwise, the questions were the same as in Phase 3 of the GPCS, enabling comparisons with this older data set. Given the low numbers of participants, these comparisons proved to be essential, as discussed in the next section. The semi-structured interview guide used in Stage 3 of Phase 5 was also adapted from the one used in Phase 2 of the GPCS. In particular, questions were added which focused specifically on detainee perceptions of the measures being implemented. The Stage 2 survey tool was developed specifically for Phase 5 of the study. It included questions which gaged staff responses to the 'I am Human' animation, with responses then being used to compile a list of good practice examples.

The data collected in Phase 5b are summarised in Table 1 below. Unlike in Force A, the research was not unduly impacted by Covid-19, for example, as a result of closures of custody suites. However, as found in previous Phases of the GPCS, there were nonetheless challenges with the data collection. For detainees, difficulties arose due to the relatively small numbers in custody on the days that the researcher was in custody and the need to ensure that only suitable detainees were approached (e.g. with respect to suspect vulnerabilities and therefore their capacity to consent to the research and potential risks to them and the researcher). For staff, in Force B, they were reluctant to “buy into” the implementation work (Police participant 7B) and to engage with the accompanying data collection (Force B Observation). As discussed below, this was mainly because of dissatisfaction with the handover sheet, as well as because staff felt the research had been foisted on them, which they thought was “unethical”, with staff conveying this to the researcher in fairly strong, and occasionally, hostile terms. Any challenges with the implementation and research work in Force C were a result of limited staff awareness of the project. Staff knew that the project was happening, but not necessarily that it involved them, meaning that the researcher had to ask hypothetical questions about some of the implementation measures – about what they would think were they implementing the information sheet, or handover sheet etc. - in order to gather the necessary data. As police participant 5C noted, this limited awareness also revealed difficulties with communications (e.g. too greater reliance on emails, which went unread rather than face-to-face briefings about the project) or perhaps a degree of lethargy and malaise amongst frontline staff. This participant said “I think they’re too fatigued to be arsed”, though at least they were not hostile. In both sites, this translated into a reluctance amongst staff to be interviewed, especially in Force B, where only one sergeant would agree to be interviewed. Given the relatively small numbers of staff participants in Stage 3 of the research, in order to protect their anonymity, they are referred to throughout as police participant 1, 2, 3 etc. and without reference to their role.

Table 1 data collected in Force A, B and C

Stage of the data collection	Force A		Force B		Force C	
	Brightfields (Test)	Highpoint (Control)	Pennilworth (Test)	Carford (Control)	Monkton (Test)	Roseford (Control)
Phase 5 (2020-21):						
Stage 1 Pre-implementation Survey: Staff	14	14	12	9	5	4
Stage 1 Pre-implementation Survey: Detainees	3	3	3	8	1	0
Stage 2 Brief Survey in response to 'I am Human'	5	n/a	4	n/a	3	n/a
Stage 3 process evaluation: Staff	3	n/a	7	n/a	5	n/a
Stage 3 process evaluation: Detainees	4	n/a	4	n/a	4	n/a
Stage 3 process evaluation: Observation	17 hours	n/a	30 hours	n/a	24 hours	n/a
Stage 4 Post-implementation Survey: Staff	1	6	4	0	3	0
Stage 4 Post-implementation Survey: Detainees	n/a due to Covid	n/a due to Covid	3	4	1	2
Phase 3 (2016-17):						
Staff data	n/a	n/a	23	15	n/a	n/a
Detainee data	n/a	n/a	12	13	n/a	n/a

Pre- and post-implementation survey data

Given the low numbers of staff and detainee participants at all sites this limited the data analysis. For example, it was not possible to compare responses from the pre- and post-implementation surveys. As such, this also limited conclusions about the impact of the implementation measures on dignity-related outcomes. It is, however, possible to reflect on what the pre- and post-implementation data combined reveals about staff attitudes towards and detainee experiences of dignity.

To do this, we compared the pre- and post-implementation survey data collected in November - December 2020 in Phase 5a and in September-December 2021 in Phase 5b with the data collected from 27 custody suites in 2016-17 as part of Phase 3 of the GPCS. This was possible because, as noted above, the questionnaire used in the implementation and evaluation research was virtually identical to that used in Phase 3 of the GPCS, with the exception of some additional questions about materiality and participant demographics. Since the implementation work aimed to impact on staff attitudes and behaviours and detainee expectations with regards dignified treatment, we compared staff and detainee responses in Brightfield and Highpoint (Force A), Pennilworth and Carford (Force B) and in Monkton and Roseford (Force C) with staff and detainee responses to key survey items in Phase 3 of the GPCS. These survey items were identified by first looking for those items that loaded by 0.4 or more on the dignity factor in the Phase 3 detainee data and then identifying corresponding items in the staff data. Averages of staff and detainee responses to these survey items were then compared by ranking the 27 custody suites in Phase 3 of the GPCS and the 6 suites in Phase 5, with a lower rank indicating a higher average score on the dignity-related items in the staff data.

In the staff data, across *all* of the ten dignity-related survey items included in the analysis, Carford (rank no. 14, average score 1.74) was the only above average suite relative to all the others in Phase 3, 5a and 5b.¹ In rank order, it was followed by Roseford (rank no. 21, average score 1.80), Brightfields (23, 1.83), Monkton (25, 1.86), Highpoint (26, 1.92) and Pennilworth (30, 2.01), albeit all these other suites were

¹ The average of the average staff scores across all dignity related measures was 1.79

below average across all dignity items in the staff survey.² However, as shown in Table 2 below, there was also some variation in terms of scores/ranks for each of the individual items and their clustering within particular factors. The figures highlighted in green show the items where suites were above the average scores for these items.

Carford was the most above average on measures of dignified treatment of detainees (on 6 of 10 possible items), particularly for those items measuring regard for detainee welfare and fair treatment. As Carford had also been included in Phase 3 of the GPCS, it was also noticeable that it had been similarly above average in Phase 3. Roseford was the next most above average suite on measures of dignified treatment of detainees (5 of 10 items). Similar to Carford, it scored particularly well on items measuring regard for detainee welfare and fair treatment. Yet neither of these suites were those where dignity-related measures were being trialled in Phase 5.

Brightfields was a suite where dignity-related measures were being trialled and it was similarly above average as Roseford (on 5 of 10 items), but more so on those items concerned with detainee welfare. Monkton – also a test site – was above average on 4 of 10 items, but these items were spread across four different factors rather than being concentrated in any one. It was above average on the following items: staff in this custody suite treat detainees with respect; staff in this suite treat all detainees fairly regardless of their background; staff can be trusted to make decisions that are right for people in this custody suite; and, staff in this suite treat people according to their individual needs.

The two suites which were the least above average were Highpoint and Pennilworth (on 1 out of 10 items each). These items were related to kindness towards and the valuing of detainees. What makes this finding interesting is that Pennilworth was one of the sites in which dignity-related measures were being trialled yet it performed poorly relative to other suites, which perhaps corresponded with difficulties with the implementation process considered above.

In the detainee data, perhaps due to low numbers of participants, it was hard to discern much difference between all the suites on the thirteen measures of treatment with dignity rooted in equal worth. As such, we have averaged detainee scores across all of these measures. This showed that all suites were above average across the thirteen measures of dignity. The only exception to this was Monkton, which was below average (see Table 3).

In summary, being a site trialling the dignity-related implementation measures did not lead to an above average score on dignity-related items in the staff or detainee survey. In the staff data, Carford was the only above average suite, but it was not one where the implementation work had taken place. However, Roseford, Brightfields and Monkton were only just outside of the above average range, with the latter two being sites where the implementation work had taken place. Highpoint and Pennilworth fared especially poorly with respect to average staff perceptions of treating detainees with dignity. This was of particular surprise for Pennilworth, given that staff there were implementing measures from the project. As explained next, this suggests there were challenges with the implementation work, particularly in Pennilworth, and in relation to some of the implementation measures more than others.

² In 2017 in Phase 3 of the GPCS, Pennilworth had scored slightly higher on these dignity related survey items, with a score of 1.79, making them nearly exactly average at this point in time, rather than below average as was found in 2021.

Table 2 – The average scores and ranks of Brightfields and Highpoint (Force A), Pennilworth and Carford (Force B) and Monkton and Roseford (Force C) on staff perceptions of whether they afforded detainees dignity, combining the pre and post-implementation data³

Factor	Item	Force A		Force B		Force C	
		Brightfields (test): score and rank	Highpoint: score and rank	Pennilworth (test): score and rank	Carford: score and rank	Monkton (test): score and rank	Roseford: score and rank
Kindness and the valuing of detainees	I always treat detainees with kindness	1.93 =17	2.10 24	2.13 =27 (2 =21 in Phase 3)	2.11 25 (1.93 =17 in Phase 3)	2.13 =27	(2 =21 in Phase 3)
	Each detainee in this custody suite is a person of value	2.53 =24	2.45 19	2.31 =14 (2.48 21 in Phase 3)	2.33 16 (2.47 =20 in Phase 3)	2.63 29	2.50 =22
Fair and respectful treatment	Staff in the suite treat all detainees fairly regardless of what they are alleged to have done	1.73 24	1.50 =12	1.88 27 (1.48 11 in Phase 3)	1.56 18 (1.27 2 in Phase 3)	1.75 25	1.50 12
	Staff in this custody suite treat detainees with respect	1.67 15	1.70 =17	1.94 27 (1.70 =17 in Phase 3)	1.78 23 (1.47 4 in Phase 3)	1.63 12	1.25 1
Acting with due regard for the welfare of detainees	I always look after detainees in this custody suite with humanity	1.40 =15	1.65 29	1.62 =26 (1.39 =12 in Phase 3)	1.33 =7 (1.13 2 in Phase 3)	1.75 =30	1.75 =30
	All staff are concerned about the welfare of detainees in this custody suite	1.53 12	1.85 26	2.00 =32 (1.57 15 in Phase 3)	1.44 7 (1.20 1 in Phase 3)	1.63 21	1.50 =8
	Staff in this suite treat all detainees fairly regardless of their background.	1.33 =11	1.45 19	1.56 =22 (1.22 =3 in Phase 3)	1.22 =3 (1.07 =1 in Phase 3)	1.38 =14	1.25 =5
Kindness and the valuing of detainees	Staff can be trusted to make decisions that are right for people in this custody suite.	2 =19	2.30 31	2.13 =28 (1.87 =14 in Phase 3)	1.78 7 (1.40 1 in Phase 3)	1.75 =5	1.50 2
Acting according to legal rules	Staff in this suite treat people according to their individual needs.	1.80 =25	1.75 =23	2.00 31 (1.61 14 in Phase 3)	1.56 9 (1.40 3 in Phase 3)	1.63 15	1.75 =23

³ In Table 2, a score of 2 or less indicates agreement and any score of 4 or more indicates disagreement, with 3 being neutral. Suites that are above average on these measures are highlighted in green. Where data is available from Phase 3, these are included too in order indicate change over time. All rankings of a possible 33 suites.

Fair and respectful treatment of detainees	Staff in this suite always talk politely to detainees.	2.33 18	2.5 =26	2.50 =26 (2.65 29 in Phase 3)	2.33 =18 (2 =1 in Phase 3)	2.38 =20	3.00 31
Overall rank across all 10 dignity-related survey items		1.83 23	1.93 26	2.01 30 (1.80 20 in Phase 3)	1.74 14 (1.53 1 in Phase 3)	1.86 25	1.80 20

Table 3 – The average scores and ranks of Brightfields and Highpoint (Force A), Pennilworth and Carford (Force B) and Monkton and Roseford (Force C) on detainee perceptions of whether they were treated with dignity rooted in equal worth, combining the pre and post-implementation data⁴

Factor	Item	Force A		Force B		Force C	
		Brightfields (test): score and rank	Highpoint: score and rank	Pennilworth (test): score and rank	Carford: score and rank	Monkton (test): score and rank	Roseford: score and rank
Overall rank across all 13 dignity-related survey items		2.15 9 (n=2)	2.00 =3 (n=2)	2.02 5 (n=5) (2.40 18 in Phase 3 n=12)	1.94 2 (n=8) (2.69 28 in Phase 3, n=11)	2.58 24 (n=2)	2.00 =3 (n=1)

Perceptions of the implementation measures

“We do that already”

In Force A, staff indicated that with regards to affording detainees dignity, “we do that already”. Indeed, the comparison to the Phase 3 data show, there was a measure of truth to this in that the test site, Brightfields, was close to nearly average on most measures of staff affording detainees dignity, with the exception of valuing detainees and treating detainees according to their individual needs. As a result of this, some staff felt irritated, frustrated and resentful of the research because they felt they were being judged, unfairly, as not already affording detainees’ dignity. This resulted in a reluctance amongst some to participate in the project, albeit that some were willing to see if they could do more to afford detainees’ dignity.

By contrast, in Force B, there was a more limited sense of staff already affording detainees dignity, as indicated by the survey data discussed above for Pennilworth, which showed it to be below average on most measures of detainee dignity in the staff data. Where staff did describe themselves as ‘doing dignity already’, they said that appropriate kinds of support were already offered to detainees at the right moments e.g. distraction box items, reading materials, information sheets. With regard the latter, Force B had been using a condensed version of the PACE Codes of Practice for about 6 months when the present project began, with this sheet always being provided to detainees, as long as they were not intoxicated. Staff also talked about being attentive to the sometimes complex individual needs of detainees as a further example of how they already afforded detainees dignity, remarking that it was other areas of police work than police custody, where citizen dignity was lacking. They said:

[I]t's probably a higher proportion of staff outside of the building that are complained about for lack of dignity because I think that — well, I've certainly never seen it while I've been here,

⁴ In Table 3, a score of 2 or less indicates agreement and any score of 4 or more indicates disagreement, with 3 being neutral. Suites that are above average on these measures are highlighted in green. Where data is available from Phase 3, these are included too in order indicate change over time. All rankings of a possible 33 suites.

anybody ... not dealing with people in a dignified manner or respecting their needs and wishes.
(Police Participant 1B)

Therefore, some saw engagement with the project as an opportunity to enhance these existing approaches to affording detainee dignity, at least in principle. Police participant 7B, for example, said “yes, we are doing it [affording detainees dignity]. Let’s record and document what we are doing, and if there’s anything different that we can learn from and alter, then why not?” However, there was some deviation from this in practice, given the challenges discussed above and below with staff responses to the project as a whole and the implementation measures it entailed.

In Force C, though staff such as Police Participant 1C said that books, magazines, the exercise yard were already routinely offered to detainees on booking in and that uptake was good, this was not always observed to be so. That is, there was less of a sense of dignity-related measures being already implemented in the present project. A key exception to this in the qualitative data was in relation to the keeping of personal effects, especially spectacles, which Police Participant 5C saying:

I’ve seen it first-hand that some of them do let people keep glasses etc. It tends to be people that wear glasses that understand that glasses, like, they empathise I guess, and that’s a really good thing. It used to be a lot more taboo. It used to be like you would never ever see it, and it would be a big shocker if somebody had been left with those ... (Police Participant 5C)

Even though staff in Force C were not always routinely implementing dignity-related measures and did not fully participate in implementing them during the project itself (see below), the project was nonetheless seen as providing a learning opportunity, in principle, albeit for slightly different reasons to in Force A and B. Police Participant 5C commented that the project had prompted a reaction, some reflection and a challenge to re-think the things that staff did daily: “just a little poke, and does that sort of focus their mind on showing that they do that a bit more? Or bringing it to their attention, bringing it to the surface? I think that’s probably the most useful part of it. It’s that that’s not a conversation that’s happening day to day, it’s just easily drowned out by everything else that goes on so actually bringing that onto the agenda’s a really, really good thing”

“What is dignity anyway”?

In many respects, the views that participants expressed about the meaning of dignity corresponded with the dimensions of dignity examined in the survey, including the need to treat detainees like human beings and recognising them as a person with a life outside of the custody setting. For example, Police Participant 1B said: “whatever they have done they are human beings, they have got pasts, you know and some of them, when they are irate, speak to them like a human being, make them feel, you know, like a human being”. This same interviewee also felt it important to recognise that “everybody has a story, everybody has a past, despite what they have done. I always see them as a human being”. Similarly, Police Participant 2C talked about the need to see the whole person and show respect “for their own body, for their own beliefs, religion and just treating people as a human being”.

Staff also thought it important to not “judge why they’re in that cell” (Police Participant 7). This seemed to correspond to the items in the survey about treating detainees fairly irrespective of what they had been alleged to have done. Staff also recognised the importance of paying attention to individual needs, as measured by the survey item on ‘staff in this suite treat people according to their individual needs’. The needs participants discussed included those of women or transwomen, who might need menstrual products or consideration being given to the gender of the person searching them (Participant Observation B, Participant 5B).

One aspect of dignity not considered in the survey data presented in this report, was privacy, albeit that we have considered this aspect of privacy elsewhere in the GPCS and by HMICFRS (e.g. see Skinns et al., 2020). Staff talked, for example, about ensuring that strip searches were as private as possible in

terms of their location and how much of a detainee's clothes were removed at any one time (Police Participant 5C), and ensuring that detainees were informed of pixilation of CCTV images around the in-cell toilets (Police Participant 2C).

By treating detainees with dignity, staff also recognised that this could have pay offs, in terms of defusing situations or “bringing them down that way because it's not what they are used to” (Police Participant 1B). In other words, staff had a sense of the value of affording detainee dignity to the overall running of custody suites and to ensuring that they were as socially ordered and as peaceful as possible.

However, some participants offered a more questioning and critical view of the meaning of dignity. For detainees such as Detainees 2B, 3B and 4B, they were unsure what dignity meant other than “being spoken to alright”. For staff, there was a feeling that if they afforded detainees dignity then there should be some expectation that this would be reciprocated which, though understandable, also failed to acknowledge the power differentials that exist between staff and detainees. For example, this participant noted:

I think it needs to be both ways. We are pushing it towards, give them that leaflet which at some stage they will throw back and say you are meant to treat me like this, I can have this, I can have that. It would be nice ... even just saying treat staff alright, they will treat you alright you know rather than just, it just seems at the minute, it's all for them, all for their benefit. You know I know they are having a worse day than I am but it would be nice for them to be told the same dignity thing or whatever, respect, you know. I'm here doing a job, I've got no beef against that guy in 26 or 52 ... I'm not a Police Officer. I'm just a bloke. (Police participant 2B)

Another variant on this theme of reciprocation and its importance to detainee dignity was for staff to treat detainees as they would expect to be treated themselves, recognising that they too could one day walk through the doors of a custody suite (e.g. Police Participant 2C). Staff also quibbled over the terminology, for example, preferring the term respect to dignity:

Dignity to me, a better word for me is respect ... dignity to me is something you associate with old people, an old lady. To me it's more respect. (Police Participant 2B)

Police Participant 2C also agreed that dignity was about respect towards detainees, as did Detainee 1B, not that they could recall any moment when this had happened during their detention. A further detainee also preferred to talk about indignity rather than dignity, which they largely connected to the cleanliness of their cell and themselves, as well as more broadly to their loss of autonomy:

In terms of dignity here, I don't think it's dignified to be sat in a cold cell, where there's a toilet with no seat, the fact I have not had a wash since I got up this morning, I have not cleaned my teeth, they have taken mugshots of me and my fingerprints and DNA, why have they done that, when I'm supposedly innocent and look at the state of me, god knows what that photo looks like and I don't take a good photo anyway! (Detainee 1C).

This flipping of the narrative in favour of more negative appraisals of police custody by detainees is not altogether surprising and is important to acknowledge in order to be sensitive to its unpleasant, distressing and painful aspects and to provide a rounded picture, in the context of a study which has used Appreciative Inquiry to explore ‘good’ police custody (Skinns et al., 2021a).

Perceptions of individual measures

In this project, staff were asked to make a number of small changes to their day-to-day practices. These included implementing changes to handover sheets and processes, using a good practice example reminder sheet, making case-by-case decisions about personal effects, providing an information sheet and opportunities to read posters positioned at strategic places in the custody suite, and providing

routine access to reading, writing and distraction box items by staff. As discussed above, the implementation measures did not entirely have the desired effect.

The survey data showed that suites that performed the best in terms of staff attitudes to detainee dignity were not necessarily those implementing the measures from the research: Brightfield and Monkton were approaching average, whilst Pennilworth was not. This may have been because of low numbers responding to the survey, which meant that changes could not be properly detected, or because of staff's concern about the project and their participation in it. In Force A, staff were reluctant to participate as they felt that "we do that already". In Force B staff were reticent because they felt the research had been foisted upon them and because, as discussed next, they were dissatisfied with particular implementation measures. In Force C, malaise and lethargy amongst staff who were already struggling with the pressures of the job seemed to be the main explanation for the implementation failures in the research, resulting in the researcher having to ask hypothetical questions about whether staff would implement the measures.

From the outset, there was no inclination to use the good practice example sheet in any of the sites, so this is not discussed here. In the discussion that follows, we consider information sheets and posters, case-by-case decision making, handover sheets, and reading, writing and other distraction items.

Information sheets and posters

In Force A, information sheets were regularly provided to detainees on arrival at the suite, provided they wished to have one and there were no reasons not to provide one (e.g. if someone was intoxicated or where there were language barriers they were not provided). This was a measure that staff were, on the whole, more willing to implement, particularly with first-time detainees, and, moreover, to retain in the future, given that it condensed valuable information and detainees were seen to engage with it and, on occasions, to use it to ask for additional support (e.g. an appropriate adult). As such, these information sheets supported autonomous decision-making – a different type of dignity (Skinns et al., 2020) – about due process rights, in circumstances in which autonomy is limited. The information leaflet was accompanied by a poster which presented the same information but in a larger format at key locations around the custody block, for example, in the consultation rooms, in the holding area, in the fingerprint room etc. These posters were seen as of more limited value, with staff regarding them as most use in the holding area, given that detainees could spend sometimes lengthy periods in there waiting to come into the main charge area. Staff in Force A made a number of suggestions about how these posters could be improved, in terms of their content, design and positioning in the future, which were incorporated into the poster used in Forces B and C in Phase 5b.

By contrast, staff in Force B preferred the information sheet that their force had introduced 6 months or so prior to the research starting. It contained similar information, but also additional information, such as about the food available in custody which they felt important for detainees to know. Therefore, staff continued to give out their own leaflets, alongside the study leaflets and the usual brief rights and entitlement sheet. As a result, they felt that the information being provided during the project was too overwhelming for detainees:

I feel that all of that information ... I can bombard them and I can see their faces when I give them — I'm like this leaflet is for your rights, which they have got to have ... this leaflet is about kind of us here and the facilities and what food we have got available and then this leaflet is just about your time here in custody and it's kind of like, bang, read that, bang, read that, bang, read that and then for the ones that say — the first question on our risk assessment is do you have any issues reading and writing, a lot of them do. (Police participant 1B)

Staff in Force B were fairly negative in their views about the posters and leaflets. Though the posters had been put up, and the leaflets were on the charge desk and staff did report handing them out (Force B Observation notes), they were less clear on whether detainees read them. Some said they got ripped

or used as paper aeroplanes (Police Participant 1B). They also complained about the potentially sharp corners which might cause paper cuts (Police Participant 2B, 3B and 4B) and shiny nature of the paper as it made it hard to sweep up after the leaflets had been ripped up (Police Participant 2B).

Please don't think I'm being negative, alright, I've seen two leaflets, one is in cell 50 next to the Bible because there's crap on the walls and everything, the other one was torn up like confetti ... if you are going to give small leaflets, can you print them on paper that's not sticky because if it had been like, you know, shiny paper ... I had to go round pick up every — because it won't sweep up because the floors are wet. (Police participant 2B)

The leaflet I'm not happy with ... It's just the actual design of it because it is so, how can I describe it? The edges are so sharp... they can be used to self-harm, if you actually scratch that down it will leave a mark and I've said it to the Inspector when you first come, if somebody was intent on self-harm which you will find that in custody they will try whatever, that is a potential thing for them to use and I think they could potentially break skin with it. (Police Participant 4B)

Because of these concerns about paper cuts, staff also reported having to consider carefully who received them, based on an assessment of risk and, though Police Participant 2B said that “I’ve never known anybody to have a paper cut here”, staff would remove them if detainees “start mucking about.

With regard to the poster, though Police Participant 7B felt the poster was “eye catching”, others felt that it became lost amongst all the other posters in the suite and was too “condescending” in that it included representations of different ethnic groups:

I've not heard any good vibes about that ... you know, pick your swear word about that thing, posters, like a lot of posters nowadays and I know they are aimed at a certain person in society but I find them so condescending. You know when you have got that collapsing figure on it like that ... And it's like, and again, you know, you have got like one white person, one black, I know you have to, but it does put me back up, you know, you just look at it and think it's just a bit namby pamby, you know. (Police Participant 2B)

Clearly, the efforts to represent a range of social groups on the poster was not appreciated by this participant, which raises questions about why. Perhaps there was a degree of inertia and a reluctance to change, even though such changes were recognised, including by this participant, as necessary, if not the right thing to do.

In terms of detainee engagement with the information sheet and poster, this seemed to be limited, perhaps because of the information overload that staff described above, because some detainees felt that they knew the process sufficiently well themselves, or perhaps because staff were not particularly keen on giving out the leaflet either. Of the detainees interviewed, some reported not being offered a leaflet and/or not noticing the poster (e.g. Detainees 1B, 3B and 4B). One detainee reported turning down the offer of an information sheet because they had been in custody before and just wanted to go to their cell:

Yeah, I seen that [the information sheet], like a long piece of paper and something else on top but I left it I never really took any leaflets or owt, every time I've come I've just, get me in my cell, get me my Solicitor, this is the Solicitor's name, just go to my cell, come and get me when you are ready for interview. (Detainee 2B)

Police participant 1B similarly noted detainees being given the leaflets and then not taking them from the custody desk. They also noted that detainees looked at the posters “because there was nothing else to look at”, but did not ask for a leaflet, and that other police officers looked more at the leaflet than detainees, e.g. picking them up off the charge desk and having a read of them whilst they waited in custody.

Staff in Force C were confused about what the information sheets were and on her first shift observing the researcher had to find these sheets for staff. Police Participant 1C said that he had been told they replaced the rights and entitlements booklet, but that was not the case. He said he only briefly glanced at the first page, but then had other things to do on a busy Saturday night. Police Participant 2C also said that he had barely looked at them. As a result, it did not appear that staff had been regularly offering these information leaflets to detainees in Monkton. Where staff had looked at them and offered them to detainees, they expressed more positive views of them than in staff in Force B and were therefore more similar in their views to staff in Force A. Staff believed, for example, that they were of greater use for first-timers rather than those who had been multiply arrested and that the concise and clear way information was explained in them was also advantageous:

We do have people who are classed as frequent flyers, people who come into custody on a regular basis. A lot of the time they will say, "Seen it, don't need it," and just put it back down. But I tend to be giving those out to everybody who's coming into custody ...I think it's quite clear in the sense of what it's offering. I think, very beneficial for people who have not been in custody before. Just gives a bit more of an explanation around it. It is easier to read than the rights leaflet, that we give out to people. That has a lot of information on there. Sometimes I find people shove off on when you give them a lot of information to read, whereas that's quite concise and quite pertinent, so yes, I think it's a good leaflet. (Police Participant 2C)

In terms of detainee engagement with the information leaflets, like in Force B, detainees in Force C had not been given leaflets and were not aware that they existed (e.g. Detainee 2C and 4C). During an interview with Detainee 3C, when shown the leaflet by the researcher, the detainee immediately looked at it and asked for further information, for example, about how long they could be held in police custody, demonstrating that the information leaflet was potentially of use to detainees, had they been more routinely offered them.

With regard to the posters, staff felt that, in theory, they were good for raising awareness, but in practice they probably would not be looked at that much. This was because, as Police Participant 1C commented, more experienced detainees who had been arrested before would not feel the need to look at them, whilst for first-timers they would be too overwhelmed to be looking at and taking in information from posters on the wall. They said:

With the detainee, when they come in, if they're a well-known person who's come in many, many times, they're not interested anyway. They say, "Here we go again, I haven't done anything wrong." And you get the usual banter. If it's the first time someone's in custody, they're like a startled hare in headlights, and they're concentrating on you behind the desk booking in. So yes, there's loads of posters up there, have I seen other people use them? Not particularly. (Police Participant 1C)

Police Participant 5C also commented that the posters had not been positioned as optimally as they could have been, such as in the holding cell, or in the cells on the block when people have nothing else to look at and "when all distractions are removed", albeit that it was not possible to position posters in the cells due to concerns about risk.

Case-by-case decision-making about personal effects

In terms of this implementation measure, Police Force A was unusual in that it had introduced a new policy requiring greater discretionary and case-by-case decision-making about detainees keeping personal effects in the cells in October 2020, shortly before Phase 5a began, bringing it into line with College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice guidelines and replacing a prior unofficial policy of removing most items (belts, shoes, shoelaces, necklaces cords). During the course of the observation, detainees were observed to have personal effects with them in the cells (e.g. coats and jumpers) and detainees also reported having these items with them, with custody officers not detention officers

making such decisions. Staff also talked about the benefits of these decisions in helping de-escalate situations, albeit that there were also risks of inconsistencies in these decisions as a result of discretion and varying toleration of and interpretation of detainee risk by staff.

Staff in Force B were, on the whole, disinterested, if not resistant, to implementing this measure, as demonstrated in the following observation, by a custody officer (CO) who had already indicated that they did not wish to give out information sheets, as part of the project:

I see [name of custody officer] booking in a woman, so walk round to observe. The woman was calm, of Bulgarian heritage, although her English seemed okay. She had been wanted on warrant since 2019 for her part in 2 robberies. When the officer told the CO, she said 'wow two years off record, that's some going'. The officer took her hair bobble and asked her to remove her jewellery ... The officer removed her bracelet, necklace and 2 rings. The detainee cried and said, 'please let me keep my ring' and the CO said, 'no love, it's not, you its standard practice for everyone, you could hurt yourself with them'. It did feel at this point that the CO was making a stance about not participating in the research at all, after all, they had already said they would not give out the leaflets ... The detainee was not given the information sheets, but when booking in the property the CO looked at one of the rings, a gold wedding band, and gave it her back. She said, 'Will it help if you have this?' and the detainee looked relieved, kissed it, and said, 'yes thank you'. (Force B Observation)

Though the CO in this excerpt did eventually return the detainee's wedding band to her, it would seem that this was not because of the research, rather because she concluded it was best for the wellbeing of the detainee after all. Police Participant 2B also expressed reluctance about letting detainees keep their personal effects, having previously seen detainees try to self-harm with a zipper from their jeans. They also said that only "trustworthy" detainees would be allowed to keep their spectacles and "frequent fliers" knew to come to custody wearing their sliders not trainers so they could keep them on:

I mean there's a guy in this morning, he's in 37, he's got glasses on, I think the rule, it's a steady — you know if they look trustworthy they will give him the glasses because I wear glasses like yourself, you know, without my contacts in I can't see ten foot, so being in a cell, it's a bit dark, it would be horrible, so I think we do look at glasses. A lot of people seem to come in in sliders, flip flops nowadays, I've noticed in, you know, the regular criminals will always come in in flip flops and keep them, otherwise we just take them off, it's like a blanket rule, which I know [name of other suite in Police Force B] doesn't have the blanket rule of taking, I believe, they will let people have their shoes sometimes. A shoe lace is going to kill you in a few minutes, I think it's safer without, shoe lace, strong enough, that's going to do you in minutes. (Police Participant 2B)

Of course the research was not asking staff to take unnecessary risks, merely to take appropriate decisions about the keeping of personal effects, based on relevant information about risk, whilst also recognising that sometimes removal of personal effects could be counterproductive if it elevated detainee distress and the likelihood of detainees 'kicking off' and thus force being used to address the situation. In other words, we were asking staff to more consciously counterbalance detainee dignity against risk in all of the decisions that they took about the removal of personal effects.

From the perspective of detainees, it was clear that staff were not engaging with this implementation measure. Detainee 2B had kept their hoodie, but with the cord removed. Detainee 3B had all her personal effects removed, including her watch, necklace, earrings and wedding band, though the latter had been returned (as per the observation notes above). Detainee 4B similarly had their trousers removed due to them containing cords, meaning they were wearing police issue joggers. They were not bothered about this, but had wanted their shoes as "it's freezing", though this was not possible as their shoes had laces.

Some detainees were also puzzled and sometimes upset about why they were having items taken away from them in police custody which they would be allowed to keep in prison. Detainee 1B noted that she had not been allowed to keep her jacket owing to it having cords in it, with staff advising her to take a police issue jumper rather than risk ruining her jacket, which she was “fine” about, though she would have preferred her own clothing. She did not, however, think it necessary for cords to be removed from clothes for people like her, especially as prisoners are allowed hoodies in prison. She felt it was only necessary for those who were suicidal:

My jacket had a cord in it, so they said they had to take the cord out or — so I was going to take the cord out and the Sergeant went don't take it out because you will ruin your jacket, we will give you one of our jumpers .. No, it should be necessary for people that are like suicidal and people that harm themselves and are known to but I don't think, I think people that are normal or are like me, if they have not got an issue, they should be fine ...People do that in prison, like obviously you have a hoodie in jail, you're allowed it but obviously it's only people, hat have got obviously severe issues like mental health or suicidal and known for doing stuff like that, that obviously won't be entitled to have stuff like that. (Detainee 1B)

Altogether, this suggests that, in Force B, little effort had been taken to alter what staff usually did with regard to decisions about detainees' keeping any personal effects in the cells. Instead, they continued to mostly remove all personal effects, placing a greater emphasis on perceived risks to the detainee than perhaps on detainee dignity.

In Force C, given the challenges discussed above with implementation in this police force area, the research was only able to offer an assessment of current practices and what staff might be willing to do in the future with respect to decisions about the keeping of personal effects. In many ways, Force C was similar to Force B in terms of its current practices, in which staff tended to remove personal effects due to concerns about risk. Hence, Police Participant 5 felt that staff should be encouraged to use more discretion in decisions about wedding bands and hair bobbles where detainees were “compliant and not causing us any issues, and there are no risk factors there”. That said, some staff did recognise the discretion they had and assessed risk in dynamic ways, which sometimes meant removing items and sometimes giving them back:

So obviously if they've been in six hours and their behaviour deteriorates, then you change it. Yes, we've had people in before that have been in 12, 13 hours without doing anything, and then gone no, this is taking too long. I'm going to tie my jumper round my neck. As soon as they start to do that, we go in, remove the jumper, and then if they carry on doing it, other items of clothing then become removed and get replaced .. withsafety clothing ... we've had that loads of times where we will come in and take over on a morning shift, someone's clearly come in and been an absolute pain. Drunk, aggressive, abusive, we come in six, seven hours later on their shift, wake them up in the morning, it's just like, "It's really cold." And then you obviously risk assess it, see how it is, and you take them out safety clothing, put them back in their own clothing, risk assess it. (Police Participant 1C)

More worryingly, though, staff also talked about using safety suits or threats of having all personal effects removed, including spectacles, in order to secure detainee compliance with the risk assessment process, as this police participant explained:

If they say [during the risk assessment], "I'm going to try and hang myself, I'm going to try and do this." They're going to end up in a safety suit. So that's why I always say to them, "Be careful the answers you give, are these genuine answers what you're going to do?" ... I've had people come in who need glasses, so that's fine. I just bring it to their attention, "That if you do into the cells with glasses, we're obviously monitoring on your CCTV, should you do anything that

I consider a risk with those glasses, then we might reconsider the decision and remove them from you.” (Police Participant 2C).

As was the case in Force B, detainees reported that they did not keep any kind of personal effects and some were disgruntled about the blunt nature of this policy, given that they felt they posed no risk to themselves. For example, Detainee 1C needed spectacles to be able to see and to walk about, but they were still taken away, which this detainee saw as “intimidation” by the police. When removing personal effects this detainee also remarked that it would have been “nice” if staff had explained why they were searching and taking away their possessions. Detainee 2C also talked about having their belt and wedding ring taken away, which they felt was unnecessary. Like Detainee 1C, they also wanted the police to explain their policy on removing personal effects more effectively and why they were taking away them away:

Me personally, they didn’t have to take anything, you know, me personally but common sense says absolutely, in today’s society you know especially with the whole mental health issue on top of everything, 100% I would want for the safety of others ... for me personally, no, they didn’t have to worry about me either but I understand the blanket policy and the requirement for it. It would have been nice maybe if it was a bit clearer. (Detainee 1C)

These feelings of frustration about having personal effects removed, and, without much by way of an explanation, led some to come up with novel solutions. Detainees 3C, for example, had fashioned a hair bobble out of a plastic cup. For some, however, these frustrations resulted in a sense of fatalism or ‘dull compulsion’, in that detainees simply accepted the removal of personal effects, as there was nothing they could do about it. Detainee 4C, for example said of staff taking their personal effects that “they do it every time ... They do it because they think you are going to hurt yourself ... It's what they have got to do, isn't it”

Handover sheets

In combination with the good practice example sheet, the intention was for handovers to include an opportunity for staff to share stories about circumstances in which detainees had been afforded dignity during their shift. This approach was intended to capitalise on the storytelling elements of police culture, which is seen as shaping and re-shaping beliefs and values (Van Hulst, 2013: 638; Shearing and Ericson, 1991; Holdaway, 1983: 154), but also on the power of storytelling for the co-creation of police values (Macaulay and Rowe, 2019). That is, the handover sheet created for the project and the discussions that were supposed to accompany it were intended as a way of further embedding dignity in police practices.

In Force A, the handover sheet proved difficult to implement because of concerns about it not being user-friendly enough and the limited time available to make use of it and to relatedly have conversations about affording detainees’ dignity at the end of one shift when staff were tired and wanting to go home. Though the handover sheet was adjusted (e.g. to add an extra column), based on feedback received, as discussed below this did not appear to impact on staff’s willingness to try using it, with little use being made of the dignity column in the handover sheets submitted to managers during the implemented period.

Staff in Force B were highly dissatisfied with the project handover sheet, compared to the one they normally used, but stressed also that this was not because they did not like change, albeit that this was not a view that was shared, with Police Participant 5B saying that “there is always a reluctance to try something new”. Staff experienced practical difficulties with filling it in as they felt the font was too small, which was particularly problematic when the sheet was printed out for discussion with the incoming shift. They did not like the colour coding, which was different to what they were used to and therefore confusing, particularly as the colour coding in their usual sheet was used to convey information about the frequency of observation that were being used for each detainee. They did not like the drop-down boxes or the fact that the name of a detainees’ solicitor could not be recorded on the

sheet or information about time of arrival into custody. As one CO said, he felt his “5 year old could format it better”. Staff also felt that the project sheet made handovers lengthier and they worried that there was more scope for human error. They also did not like the use of different terminology in the project handover sheet e.g. children and young people rather than ‘juvenile’. These frustrations led staff to edit the project handover sheet, so that it resembled the sheet they were accustomed to using, including replacing the dignity column with one called ‘notes’. One CO was observed to be jubilant when the project handover sheet was formally rejected mid-way through the implementation period and staff were allowed to go back to the sheet they normally used.

These difficulties with the handover sheet were also because of a mismatch between what staff saw as the main purpose of the handover sheet – to communicate information about detainee risk to the incoming shift and summarise relevant information about a detainee – and the intended purpose of the handover sheet in the project, which was to broaden the focus of handovers from risk to also include dignity. Staff therefore did not see the handover sheet or handovers as the place to talk about detainees’ dignity.

For me the handover itself is more about risk management, not about the dignity of the prisoners because that is just, that’s managed and it’s handled on a more hands on basis by the Detention Officers anyway because we only generally meet the prisoners when they are booked in and then when they are going for interview, or if they raise anything that obviously they want to speak to us about. (Police Participant 1B)

As a result of the focus on risk in handovers, staff also regarded a detainees’ ethnicity, gender or nationality, as an irrelevance too. Police Participant 4B, for example, said, “all we need to know is ... what is that person in for, at what stage of the inquiry are we at ... is there any sort of risk or ... is he legally represented. Stuff like ethnicity... it’s not really of any relevance to a handover”.

In Force C, Police Participant 5C said that staff were not aware of the project handover sheet and it had not been used. Given that Police Participant 2C noted that communicating information about detainee risk was the main focus of handovers in Force C, it is likely that staff may have responded in a similar way to Force B, had the handover sheet been implemented.

Reading, writing materials and other distraction items

In Force A, like the decision to enable detainees to keep personal effects on a case-by-case basis, the provision of ‘distraction box’ items (e.g. Sudoku, word searches, colouring books, puzzles, soft balls to throw in cells or the exercise yard) had also been implemented prior to the implementation and evaluation starting, in January 2020. Perhaps because of the perceived benefits of distraction items (e.g. in alleviating detainee anxiety, stress and worry and in managing risk to some extent), they had slowly been accepted and increasingly adopted, including during the research period, with their benefits also being recognised to some extent by detainees. That said, use of these items was limited by the availability of appropriate books and other distraction items, and by staff availability to provide them.

In Force B, they had trialled distraction items such fidget toys, in the past and prior to the implementation period starting, meaning there was a good supply of items, which were kept at the end of each wing. During the research staff were keen to make these items available, though decisions about distraction items were significantly shaped by the need to manage a detainee’s risk, which was seen to change during someone’s detention. It was not the case, therefore, that all people were offered, let alone received, these items. Staff were concerned that things like playing cards or soft footballs would be ripped up, eaten or destroyed once people tired with them (Police Participant 1B and 2B), that colouring books were “ridiculous” and that pencils would be used to deface the walls. Moreover, they also felt that any of these items might be used by detainees to harm themselves. Therefore, as this Police Participant (and also Police Participant 3B) commented, detainees had to be seen to be trustworthy before distraction items were provided:

I know you have to treat people with dignity and I get where you are coming from with this, you, give them something to do but you know give them something to do but I don't trust nobody, you know, I've seen people go in there and take the zip of their jeans, try and cut their wrist. (Police Participant 2B)

Hence, staff said that they had to pick and choose between who they would provide these things to and who they would not, on a rolling basis, given the changing nature of a detainee's risk, as determined by them.

However, they did also see the benefits of distraction items. Police Participant 7B said that distraction items helped detainees to cope with being held in a "mind numbing concrete box", making them more "compliant", given the "boredom" they felt. These reasons for seeking distraction were echoed by Detainee 4B, who noted how custody "sends you crazy, you have got 4 walls and a toilet, innit." Overall, staff expressed a preference for soft footballs and books, but less so colouring and writing materials, Poppits, Rubik's Cubes, fidget spinners:

[S]ponge football's a good one, always works, when they are in the exercise yard their face lights up when they see a sponge football. Every now and then we have had, we have given them in the cell as well put them on camera and they have kicked it against the wall for two hours and they have been happy ... if somebody's got the right book, they will just sit for hours. Somebody with the right mindset who knows they are not going anywhere or knows there's nothing else to do, if they have got a good book, yeah ... We had one chap in the other day, he asked for some lined paper and a pencil, alright, yeah, so we got him some lined paper and he wrote a child's novel ... (Police Participant 1B)

Staff such as Police Participants 2B, 3B and 4B were concerned that Poppits could be easily broken and Rubik's cubes, if broken, had sharp pieces, and that fidget spinners were heavy and could be thrown at staff in ways that might hurt them. With pens, pencils, crayons, staff expressed consternation about detainees' defacing the walls with them, with nearly all referring to what sounded like the same instance of this happening in the past, with a young person in custody:

[W]ith people given pens and pencils, crayons, they draw on the cells, they damage stuff, they try and eat the crayons or the pencil, they self-harm with pencils, the crayons just break then they get frustrated because they can't do — or they want to colour, nobody can colour with crayons, do you know what I mean, they want to colour within the lines because that's their, you know, that's their particular thing and we are giving them massive great crayons that you can't colour within the lines, so then they get frustrated with that. So it almost kind of antagonises them more than helps them to manage their issues while they are there. What can I say? I mean we give them books, if they are halfway through the book we let them leave with it, you know. Yeah, Poppits, they sit and push the Poppits out. I mean if that way in mind, they eat then Poppits or, anything that you are going to give somebody in the cell is a risk to them because people will always be creative as to what they can do but short of stripping people naked, which is not appropriate, you can't ever prevent the risk, it's just about managing the risk. (Police Participant 1B)

In terms of resourcing these items, Police Participant 1B talked about books coming from a local charity shop and a member of staff being good at "fetching stuff" into the custody suite, albeit that sometimes the good books "keep getting nicked or shredded but you know generally we will make the offer, if you needs something to take your mind off it, there's books available." (Police Participant 4B). In order to provide adequate resources, Police Participant 3B talked about "thinking outside of the box" by printing out new stories in other languages and so that detainees from a range of backgrounds had access to reading materials.

In Force C, distraction items were mainly books, colouring materials and writing materials (Police Participant 1C, 3C and 4C). Of the reading materials that were available, these were limited and tucked away in a cardboard box which the researcher had to seek out. Police Participant 2C said there was “Caravanning Weekly ... I mean, for blokes it's not great. ... And if they come in regularly, it's like, ‘I read this last time’. So you're, like, ‘I'm really sorry, but yes’”. The limited availability of a range of resources meant hypothetical questions were asked of staff about other distraction items, such as soft balls (too noisy for the cells and would have to be confined to the exercise yard, Police Participant 3C), fidget spinners (too dangerous if snapped and broken, Police Participant 3C) and Poppits (which were seen as likely to be beneficial). This necessarily limited participants comments, with staff commenting that detainees would need to be carefully risk assessed before they could be given these other items (Police Participant 1C and 2C). Others were only able to offer broad support, saying, “if it occupies their mind, keeps them relaxed and calm, I can't see that as being a negative, that's always a positive in my eyes” (Police Participant 4C).

There was also limited offering of these resources (Participant Observation, Force C). Though detainees may have been told they could request distraction items on booking, as the researcher observed, “there is a difference between someone explaining you can request books and magazines and something being offered”. This was confirmed by Detainee 1C, who said “they mentioned there was reading material available but I wasn't actually offered any”. Detainee 4C also said they were offered nothing. Rather than the focus being on risk, in terms of who received distraction items, as was the case in Force B, the emphasis in Force C, was more on who was in custody for longer:

Yes, we do offer it. It tends to obviously be the people that are here for the longer periods of time, like obviously we've got two people in at the moment that are due for court on Monday that have already been here a day and a half. So obviously they were arrested day and half ago and then remanded late on last night obviously to stay until Monday. So with people like that, that are normally asking for magazines and bits and bobs like that to read, and there's quite a good book selection outside, out the back, but and there's magazines and stuff like that as well. But they're not brilliant. (Police Participant 1C)

Some staff downplayed the risk-laden concerns of staff. Instead, they suggested that staff reticence to do more than say that detainees *may* request these items was because of them being overstretched:

They would like to provide these things, and they would like to make the environment better, because ultimately a more relaxed, happier prisoner makes staff's lives easier, but they just feel like they've got everything else to do. They've got a queue in the back, they need to do this, they need to do that, so it doesn't become part of a habit ... they don't because it just doesn't become part of their daily routine. (Police Participant 5C)

Continuing with the implementation measures

In terms of which of the implementation measures the staff would keep in the future in Force A, staff talked about the value of retaining most of the main measures, but particularly the information leaflets and the posters. It was suggested that the latter need a more condensed eye-catching format and to be more optimally positioned (e.g. mainly in the holding areas and in police vans) to encourage detainees to request an information leaflet. Together these could be used to reinforce detainees' key rights and entitlements in ways that promote autonomous decision-making.

In Force B, Police Participant 7B felt that all measures would be welcomed in the future, with the exception of the handover sheet, saying “I think everything else should be in there anyway as a matter of course. In Force C, it was the posters and custody information leaflet which Police Participant 5C felt would be of the most value in the future. This was particularly so if the posters could be shared with detainees in the cells, where people have nothing to do, other than look at the poster, and also if the information leaflet could be combined with the PACE Rights and Entitlements leaflet.

Conclusions and recommendations

In Phase 5b of the ‘good’ police custody study quantitative research was used to compare two custody blocks per police force area – Pennilworth (the test site) and Carford (the comparator site) in Force B, and Monkton (the test site) and Roseford (the comparator site) in Force C - before and after the implementation of key measures aimed at supporting greater detainee dignity, targeting staff attitudes and behaviours and detainee expectations. This was combined with qualitative research during the implementation process to examine perceptions of the implementation process. Throughout this report, this data has also been compared with data collected in Phase 5a (see Skinns et al., 2021b).

More than in Phase 5a, this project encountered challenges with staff and detainee participation. In Force B, this was for example due to dissatisfaction with specific implementation measures, whilst in Force C this was due to staff malaise and challenges with communicating important information about the project. The unpredictable nature of the number and suitability of detainees in police custody at the time the researchers were present added further challenge. This resulted in challenges with the implementation and data collection processes, including small numbers of custody officers participating in interviews and low numbers of participants in the survey, particularly detainees. The latter meant it was particularly difficult to measure the impact of the implementation measures on staff attitudes and detainee expectations about dignity.

The pre- and post-implementation survey data from Phases 3, 5a and 5b showed that only, Carford, a site where no implementation measures were introduced, was above average using measures of detainees’ dignified treatment. Roseford, Brightfields, Monkton, Highpoint were very close to this average, however. For example, the mean score in the staff data combining responses across all dignity-related survey items was 1.79. Carford had a score of 1.74, making it above average, whilst Roseford, Brightfield, Monkton and Highpoint respectively scored 1.80, 1.83, 1.86 and 1.93, making them below average. Given that a score of 2 or less shows agreement with the dignity-related statements in the staff survey, it was more the strength of agreement that differed across all these sites, rather than whether or not staff agreed with these statements. The only exception to this was Pennilworth, whose score of 2.01 suggested that, overall, staff were ambivalent in their responses to the dignity-related survey items (with this being more so than had been the case when they had been surveyed in 2017 when the average score was 1.79).

Through the process evaluation, the project also demonstrated the *perceived* value of making detainee dignity a greater focal point in all that staff do in police custody. Staff in Forces A and C appreciated the concise nature of the information sheets that were implemented as part of the project, particularly for those entering police custody for the first time. They were a useful tool for encouraging greater autonomy in relation to the decisions that detainees may make for themselves.

There were also signs in Brightfields that operational staff were adapting to recent formal changes to police custody policies and practices in Force A about the need for individualised decision-making about detainee personal effects and the need to ensure that material items (e.g. distraction items) were routinely provided to detainees. This was primarily because staff saw the benefits of these changes to policies and practices in terms of de-escalating fraught encounters with detainees and in supporting the mental wellbeing of detainees. By contrast, though they recognised these benefits, staff in Forces B and C were more reluctant to embrace individualised decision-making about personal effects and engaged in a more risk-dominated approach to decisions about the provision of reading, writing and other distraction items. Further cultural change and better resourcing of distraction items is therefore needed in Forces like B and C, in order for these implementation measures to succeed. In spite of this, the present project lends further support to their importance and to the need to continue to implement these measures in the future.

Part of the cultural change needed in Forces B and C is to further embed notions of detainee dignity in staff attitudes and behaviours. There was not the same sense in Pennilworth and to a lesser extent Monkton, as in Brightfields of this being important to staff and something that they did already. As noted in Skinns et al. (2021b), in Brightfields, there was an established drive to orient police custody around concepts like dignity and the project therefore enabled staff to do more of what they were already doing in terms of affording detainees dignity, with potential benefits for detainees' sense of equal worth and autonomy and for staff in terms of greater cooperation. Therefore, cultural acceptance of the need for detainee dignity requires further realisation in Pennilworth, with a view to bringing it into line with other suites – including Carford in the same police force area – which were either above or close to average on measures of detainee dignity. This also underscores the importance of recognising varying staff attitudes and behaviours *within* not just between forces when it comes to detainee dignity, as noted in earlier stages of the GPCS and in other research studies.

This report set out to describe the implementation and evaluation methods employed in Phase 5b of the GPCS and to critically examine the (perceived) effectiveness of the measures implemented. Its last set of aims were to explore the implications of the research and make recommendations for future practice.

In terms of continuing to grow the focus of staff on detainee dignity it is recommended that:

- Standardised custody information leaflets be provided in the future across England and Wales. This will mean surveying police forces about the information leaflets they currently use, if at all, and integrating them with the leaflet used in the present project to create one leaflet which can be used by all forces.
- In the longer-term, these custody information leaflets should be made more accessible for a wider range of detainees. This could be achieved by creating a digital format (e.g. a short video or audio clip) and thinking about how the leaflet might be translated readily into other languages. Further work is also needed with regards to when, where and how such (digital) information might be best relayed to detainees, including in police vans, holding cells and cells on the wings of the custody suite.
- A widely shared, online repository is created for evidence-informed critical information for detainees, including information leaflets of the kind used in this project, but also information leaflets for particular types of detainees, such as young suspects.
- Decisions about the keeping of personal effects should continue to be taken on a case-by-case basis as per Force A's policy introduced in October 2020. The research shows that staff across all forces in the research recognised the benefits of this policy, albeit that these benefits were not fully realised, with the exception of in Force A.
- The *routine* provision of material items, including distraction items should also continue into the future and staff should have the necessary resources (time, books, reading and writing materials, soft balls etc.) to enable this to happen. This is likely to require significant investments from individual police forces in appropriate resources, rather than relying on ad hoc arrangements which depend on the charity of individual members of staff.
- To further encourage below average suites to become above average, staff should be encouraged to increase their focus on detainee dignity (e.g. through providing the custody information leaflets trialled in Phase 5a and 5b, alongside greater encouragement to routinely provide material items and make case-by-case decisions about detainee personal effects). Learning about this process of embedding detainee dignity in practice could also be shared between forces, such as through working groups and events coordinated by the National Custody Forum/NPCC Lead for Police Custody, and through relevant custody staff training, such as the national training on 'Managing vulnerability in police custody' coordinated by the College of Policing.

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