

## ICVA WELCOMES INCREASED DIGNITY FOR FEMALE DETAINEES

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The Independent Custody Visiting Association welcomes proposed ground breaking reforms to legislation that will require police forces to respect the dignity of female detainees and deliver appropriate care to menstruating detainees.

ICVA wrote to the then Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, in January this year to report on shocking conditions in police custody where detainees had been left to bleed out, having been denied proper menstrual care or products. The Home Office committed to legislative change following ICVA's reports. The proposed changes require police forces to deliver effective and dignified care for menstruating detainees. The consultation on this legislative change, launched today, requires all police forces in England and Wales to:

- Enable all female detainees to speak to female members of staff whilst in police custody.
- Ask female detainees, at the earliest opportunity, whether they need menstrual products when in police custody and provide them free of charge.
- Give sufficient care and consideration to the dignity of all menstruating detainees.

The changes to legislation complement new guidance from the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council, published earlier this month. Together, the reforms to legislation and guidance safeguard the needs of female detainees who may feel too intimidated to request menstrual products and will ensure that they can change them privately and hygienically.

ICVA's Chief Executive, Katie Kempen, said: "All detainees should be treated humanely and with dignity. Periods remain a taboo subject and we found that detainees were simply going without products for want of a cheap tampon or a difficult conversation. The National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing and Home Office are delivering a suite of safeguards that will protect the dignity of female detainees."

Natasha Plummer, ICVA's Vice Chair said: "Independent custody visitors invest their time visiting police custody to uphold the dignity and wellbeing of detainees. We were horrified to hear their reports of poor menstrual care, ineffective products, lack of access to washing facilities and no access to female staff. We welcome the Home Office's commitment to drive up standards and ensure that all detainees are treated with dignity."

Martyn Underhill, Chair of ICVA and PCC for Dorset said: "These changes will help us to change the male dominated mindset in custody suites to accommodate and facilitate the basic needs of women."

Dame Vera Baird, Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria said: "I welcome the proposed changes to PACE Codes. Where the Home Office has gone, the Ministry of Justice must follow to get women similar protection in court custody."

ENDS

### Further information

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- The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) is in place to lead, support and represent local independent custody visiting schemes where local members of the public make unannounced visits to police custody to check on the rights, entitlements and wellbeing of detainees.
- ICVA wrote to the Home Secretary in January 2018 to report on poor conditions in police custody and request legislative change. Further information can be found on our website: [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)