

Sent via email

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**RE: Anti Rip Clothing Update Report**

Dear colleague,

As most of you will be aware the [National Strategy for Police Custody](#) was published in January 2023. One of the four key workstreams of the strategy is “Environment” and this workstream aims to deliver a world-leading, safe, and professional service environment for detained people, officers, staff, partners, and visitors. We will support the welfare and dignity of the detained person and our custody environment will make the best use of technology and evidence-based research, to ensure we can provide a safe and welcoming estate for all that is adaptable to changes in climate, use, and need.

I wanted to bring to your attention a piece of work that has been ongoing since 2022; this work was led by the Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA) with the support of Dyfed Powys and National Police Chiefs' Council; focussing on the use of Anti-Rip Clothing by police.

ICVA are currently preparing their final report on this work, and it is expected in the coming months. Due to unforeseen circumstances this update report has been delayed but I attach a copy of their interim report which clearly shows the importance of this work.

**Context:**

ICVA have reviewed all His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Service (HMICFRS) inspectorate reports from 2017 to July 2022 (a small number are repeat inspections). Of 39 reports reviewed, 27 reports note the use of anti-rip suits. 24 of the 27 reports contain issues. There were only three reports containing no issues where the clothing was used. Other than the three noted, all reports where anti-rip clothing was used contained issues around proportionality, justification, detainee dignity or a combination of factors which were recorded as areas in need of improvement, or more often as causes of concern.

The reports revealed consistent concerns with the use of anti-rip clothing in custody, a brief overview of recorded issues being:

- The suits/clothing are recorded as being used in the absence of risk information, often with difficult detainees, by force, and have been noted as being potentially punitive.



- Poor recording and practice in terms of both proportionality and justification of the use of the suits.
- Concerns regarding detainee dignity being effectively maintained during clothing removal by force.
- Detainees have been left naked in an endeavour to manage harming behaviours, in suites both where the clothing is used, and those where it is not.
- Using the clothing when detainees are also on Level 4 observations which is reported as unnecessary.

What we have learnt from studies such as ['Good' police custody](#) by Prof. Layla Skinns et al, is that dignity should be at the heart of our decision making and the Anti-Rip work highlights why this is so important. ICVA's work compliments Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels (CDSPs) which has received overwhelming support from both Chief Constables' Council (CCC) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). CDSP guidance was circulated earlier this year and I am humbled by the response of forces to this initiative, and I am pleased to see the progress on their implementation across England and Wales.

The use of anti-rip suits is never an automatically desirable requirement as they do impact on the dignity of the detainee. Their use is essentially a trade-off between maximising the dignity of the detainee against their safety, which is of course is paramount. We need to be as sophisticated as possible at reducing the risk to the detainee so as to minimise the impact on the detainee's dignity. This, of course is not easy and ICVA's report highlights some of the reasons why. But that should not deter us, and I welcome this work which supports a number of the principles and particularly 'Betterment and Environment' workstreams of the NPCC Custody Strategy. ICVA has presented three recommendations to the NPCC Custody Portfolio, and I can confirm that I am happy to support two of these.

- Chief Constables are encouraged to ensure that all forces, implement a reportable function for the use of anti-rip clothing on custody systems to allow greater scrutiny.
- Chief Constables are encouraged to ensure that the automatic or default use of anti-rip clothing in the absence of risk information because a detainee is not engaging in the risk assessment questions, is inappropriate and should cease.

I appreciate that the implementation of a reportable function on police IT systems may be a challenge, but I encourage you to explore this option with your relevant IT, record management (RMS) department. This action will also further assist with Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels (CDSPs) and future Home Office – Annual Data Requirements (ADR).

To further support your CDSP journey and best practice, ICVA have helpfully shared their RAG matrix and questionnaire that Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) will be using on their inspections nationally; this document is attached to this correspondence.



The final recommendation from ICVA seeks to remove the use of anti-rip clothing in police custody and I have agreed to explore this. You will all receive a benchmarking request in the near future from the new lead of the "Environment" workstream, the aim is to collate Anti-Rip practice nationally to scope if this may be possible. The NPCC Custody Portfolio will explore what suitable alternatives exist in relation to anti-rip products and we will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to make custody as safe as possible for both detainees and staff whilst maintaining dignity.

Thank you for your continued support and for your cooperation with this work. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact my staff officer Nathan Neville at [Nathan.neville@surrey.police.uk](mailto:Nathan.neville@surrey.police.uk) (author) or T/Superintendent Michael Hodder at [Michael.hodder@surrey.police.uk](mailto:Michael.hodder@surrey.police.uk) and T/Inspector Christian Thomas at [Christian.thomas@sussex.police.uk](mailto:Christian.thomas@sussex.police.uk)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Kemp', is positioned above the typed name.

Nev Kemp QPM  
National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Custody  
Deputy Chief Constable  
Surrey Police

