

Women in Police Custody

ICV Checklist

Aug 2024



The Corston Report (2007) A Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System (opens an external website in the same tab) found that, owing to the high level of complex needs, socio-economic and family consequences of imprisonment, and the different range of offences committed by women, there are fundamental differences between male and female offenders. In the light of this, it is apparent that a different and distinct approach is needed for female detainees.

ICVA has undertaken work in 2019 on effective menstrual care in police custody, resulting in changes to the PACE codes. In 2024, as a result of work from Sussex OPCC and ICVA, amends were made to the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice introducing a new referral pathway for those 40 and over who may experience symptoms of perimenopause/menopause. This checklist is one developed specifically for ICVs visiting women in police custody reflecting those changes, and wider considerations for this group.

In the custody suite:

- Staff** – are the staff aware of and pro-actively offering women and girls in custody the chance to speak to a female member of staff?
- Staff** – are the staff aware that they need to pro-actively offer menstrual protection to all female detainees?
- Staff** – are the staff aware of the new guidance for women over 40 to be offered a chance to speak to healthcare regarding perimenopause/menopause?
- Stock** – does the suite have a good selection of menstrual care products, individually wrapped and in date?
- Stock** – are there stocks for women experiencing peri-menopause and menopause symptoms (these will vary but might include things such as paper fans, face mists, pen and paper and so on subject to risk assessment).

When talking to a detainee:

- Has the detainee been offered a chance to speak to a member of staff of the same sex?
- Has the detainee been offered menstrual protection?
- Is the detainee aware that the toilet area is pixelated?
- Has the detainee been asked about any caring responsibilities?
- If a search has taken place, does the detainee report having been treated with dignity and with only female staff present?
- Has the detainee been given any additional items to assist with symptoms of perimenopause/menopause if appropriate (please see note on stocks and also consider appropriate adult provision if necessary).
- Has the detainee been pro-actively offered clean, replacement clothing and washing facilities?

When looking at the custody record (with permission)

- Has the staff member checked, and arrangements made for any caring responsibilities the detainee might have?
- Does the custody record contain that a female detainee has been offered the opportunity to speak to a female member of staff?
- Has this discussion been offered to be private?
- Does the custody record state that menstrual protection has been offered and by whom?
- If the detainee requires and has been given menstrual protection, does the custody record note when replacement products have been offered?
- If the detainee is 40 or over, does the custody record state that they have been offered an opportunity to speak to healthcare about any symptoms of perimenopause/menopause?
 - If yes, has a care plan been completed?
 - Does the detainee have all of the arrangements in place resulting from a care plan (this may include items such as paper fans, a paper and pen, face misting spray and so on depending what is available in suites).

On release (appreciating that ICVs may not see this part of the process):

- Is the detainee being released in appropriate clothing to go home?
- Have arrangements been made for transport home, in particular if late at night or the suite is in a remote location?

When completing your report

- Report on rights, entitlements and wellbeing as normal.
- Ensure you report areas of good practice as well as those of concern.

If you have had access to the custody record:

- Record if the detainee was informed that they could speak to a member of staff of their own sex in private.
- Record whether menstrual care was offered.
- Record if the detainee was offered a chance to speak to healthcare regarding menopause if appropriate and if a care plan was put in place.
- Note anything that seems unusual in the custody record.
- Comment on the quality of the custody records information regarding detainee dignity.

Scheme managers

- Please highlight any problems, themes or strengths to your PCC.
- Please report themes and issues to ICVA as part of your quarterly report.