Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Police Scotland’s digital, data and ICT provision

Custody related ICT provision and iris recognition

The following information is provided for information of the Justice Sub-Committee.

It is understood that members have sought information relative to the potential use of Iris Recognition technology in the custody environment and specifically whether this could reduce the length of time taken to process people into custody. It is also understood that further information on the National Custody System (NCS) and Custody Centre CCTV provision is sought in relation to how these technologies have already, or are anticipated, to streamline processes.

Context on prisoner processing times

In terms of processing times for persons coming into police custody, these vary significantly for each person as a consequence of a number of factors. Whilst the process of ‘legislative’ and ‘care and welfare’ requirements that need to be completed for each person coming into police custody are well structured, (i.e. as captured on the National Custody System), the time taken to process these requirements (i.e. the book-in process) are varied as a consequence of the custody individual circumstances and staff training/experience.

In terms of a custody’s individual circumstances, the following factors cause variability in processing time; state of vulnerability or intoxication; compliance or non-compliance; communication requirements (i.e. language interpretation or adjustments for disability); specific medical conditions or enhanced care and welfare considerations; volume of personal property to be recorded; whether previously listed on NCS; and a number of other considerations such as depth of familiarity with police and justice processes.

Staff training and experience can also have a factor on prisoner processing times, where a more experienced staff member that is very familiar with the National Custody System and custody procedures will be able to process a prisoner in a quicker time period than a less experienced staff member.

As a consequence of factors such as those described, prisoner processing times vary. In circumstances of an experienced staff member, and a prisoner that has limited property, limited vulnerability and that there are no other considerations can be processed from around a ten minute time frame. In contrast, a prisoner that has increased vulnerability, specific communication needs, volumes of property and is unfamiliar with police or justice processes, can take up to an hour to be processed, and in some cases, such as where medical needs require a transference to hospital, completion of the ‘book in process’ can then take a number of hours until completion.

These variabilities are all acknowledged and are at the forefront of considerations aligned to the ongoing Criminal Justice Services Division (CJSD) Transformation Programme, through which a variety of projects and approaches are being explored.
to transform Custody and Criminal Justice Services. This Programme includes the work to introduce new Criminal Justice Hubs and in exploring new technologies that would either improve care and welfare arrangements or bring efficiencies to the management of custodies, such as having a positive impact on prisoner processing times.

**Use of ‘iris recognition’**

Facial recognition within policing across the world has become a topical issue over the last 12 months, with news stories such as the police in China using facial recognition embedded into CCTV to identify and capture a criminal in a crowd of 60,000 within 5 minutes. In a more realistic context, this innovation could prove extremely useful to Police Scotland and in particular within its custody facilities.

Using iris scanning techniques would, in theory, reduce queue time, reduce the time custody officers spend form-filling, and quickly identify repeat visitors. The benefits of this are obviously clear however facial recognition presents considerable risk if implemented poorly without the proper consultation and funding. Despite this, it has been successfully integrated into other sectors – such as aviation, where it is now common practice to use iris-scanning at passport barriers and some forces in England and Wales are already using a form of this technology.

The idea could also bring great benefit to the most vulnerable people within Police Scotland’s custody system – these individuals would be easier to identify and officers would have more time to understand their unique situations. Iris scanning has also been proven to generate more accurate results than other biometric methods, such as fingerprint identification.

In terms of current position and progression relative to Iris Recognition Technology, and as previously reported, an Innovation Sub Group has been established within the CJSD Transformation Programme to specifically explore this and other potential innovation solutions that could bring improvements and efficiencies to Custody Management and across the other areas of Criminal Justice Services in Police Scotland.

In this regard, Iris Recognition Technology will be subject to rigorous scoping and options appraisal in the forthcoming 12 months and therefore the specific benefits that could be realised (which may include improved prisoner processing times), costs and implementation implications for Police Scotland are unclear at this time.

**National Custody System (NCS)**

The National Custody System (NCS) was implemented on 12th January 2017.

Prior to NCS, five different legacy custody computer systems were used which presented significant challenge in the context of a national policing service. The disparate systems had some variations in data collection and process, presented challenge for data interrogation, presented challenges for risk assessment information access in terms of custodies that would cross legacy force boundaries,
had limitations in respect of remote management which would not have been compatible with the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill.

NCS was the only Police Scotland owned legacy system and therefore has no attached licence / maintenance or external development costs. It was originally designed specifically to be a national system, with full visibility and the ability for the record to be updated remotely (by a user with the correct system permissions).

In terms of NCS there have been a number of key benefits since introduction, examples include;

- NCS providing a single consistent platform for custody management
- NCS enabling full compliance and integration with the new Criminal Justice Act
- NCS providing flexibility for the current and any future Custody Operating Models. For example, it maximises resource usage through its national supervision capability, such as arrest reviews and approvals able to be undertaken by a remote Custody Review Inspector (not connected to the enquiry), or that for secondary and PC led centres, that arrest authorisations can be given remotely from a Custody Sergeant at a “parent” primary centre.
- NCS having improved and consistent capability to undertake a range of critical custody management tasks, such as the administration of prisoner medication with a scheduled timer.
- NCS is well placed to be integrated with future technologies, for example, the potential use of mobile devices that could allow more efficient and timeous update of prisoner cell visits in real time rather than retrospectively.
- NCS as a single system has improved consistency in staff training arrangements, and where system changes are subsequently made, enables a consistent and easier integration and update briefing to all staff users.
- NCS facilitates the seamless electronic transfer of custody records between clusters (where required) and has afforded a number of linked custody processes to be consistently introduced (in system and linked) such as the PIROS process becoming electronic and embedded.
- NCS has provided a single platform of data that enables a key management information view to inform and support ongoing and future innovations.

Since introduction, NCS has undoubtedly improved the position of Custody Management across Police Scotland, bringing consistency of approach, greater management oversight, and it has provided a system that has the potential to be developed in line with any future innovative solutions identified through the CJSD Transformation Programme.

**Custody CCTV provision**

In the Custody environment CCTV is used to record a prisoner’s movements whilst within the custody centre from arrival to departure. In the Custody environment, CCTV is used for two core purposes, firstly for evidential purposes in line with due legal process (i.e. the provision of persons rights) and secondly to support and manage the care and welfare of a person in custody.
In cell CCTV cameras allow for the safe monitoring of prisoners as appropriate and can provide an early indication as to the general wellbeing of the prisoner; for example any prisoner attempting to self-harm; attempting to recover internally concealed drugs from their person; or in assessing a person that becomes unwell. CCTV monitoring in this regard can allow immediate action to be taken to ensure prisoner safety and wellbeing. In the cases of the most vulnerable and high risk prisoners, CCTV technology can free up valuable officer time. Without CCTV, a high risk prisoner would likely need constant observation from one of two officers to ensure best management of their care and wellbeing. With CCTV, the volume of officers physically deployed is reduced through remote monitoring and this allows a greater return of police officers to frontline policing. It should be noted that Human Rights considerations are carefully considered in prisoner risk assessments with decisions for placement of a person in a CCTV constant observation cell subject of clear rationale on the custody record.

In legislative terms, CCTV monitoring is often used to evidence application of due legal process (i.e. prisoner rights), it captures evidence of crimes committed in the custody environment and can be used to protect Police Officers against malicious complaints and protect prisoners against any inappropriate conduct.

At present CCTV is not installed in every custody centre, however it is installed in every primary custody centre. As a consequence, initial assessments of a prisoner’s vulnerability may determine that it is necessary to convey that person direct to a primary custody centre fitted with CCTV for the benefit of enhanced ability to monitor health and wellbeing.

In terms of current CCTV provisions, there are circa 1,200 recorded CCTV assets in Police Scotland (these include cameras, controllers, monitors and recording devices). The standard of these assets vary significantly across the country as a consequence of legacy arrangements and investment. The assets include CCTV systems from at least 14 different manufacturers and the ages of the systems also vary.

With the quality and longevity of existing CCTV systems varying considerably, CCTV features as a standing item on a dedicated CJSD Estates Group where through this group there is a prioritisation of capital spend on an annual basis to both introduce new CCTV, or to upgrade existing CCTV.

In addition and as part of the CJSD Transformation Programme (aligned to the introduction of Criminal Justice Hubs), additional transformation funding has been allocated for CCTV within the Hubs improvement

As an illustration of current provision and proposed investment for the Phase 1 Criminal Justice Hubs, an overview is provided in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Cells</th>
<th>Current Cells with CCTV</th>
<th>CCTV installed</th>
<th>Proposed Transformation Programme Works for CCTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kittybrewster</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>No additional works required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Provision has been made in the 2018/19 year to upgrade and replace CCTV cell units to ensure coverage in each active cell, and for an upgrade to holding area and external area CCTV units as well as a potential CCTV server relocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Upgrade works have already been completed to bring CCTV coverage to each cell. Additional provision has been made in the 2018/19 year towards replacement of CCTV recorders and the formation of a CCTV observation cell monitoring space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Road</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Provision has been made in the 2018/19 year to install CCTV in the 25 cells that do not currently have coverage, and to upgrade CCTV in charge bars, holding areas and secured cages as well as a relocation of the CCTV server into a purpose built room within existing custody footprint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, CCTV is an essential aspect of technology in the custody environment. An investment programme is ongoing through the CJSD Transformation Programme and a prioritised annual capital spend. In addition and as part of the Innovation Sub Group mentioned in this paper, CCTV also features with scoping and consideration ongoing regarding potential for technology such as ‘Smart Cameras’ to detect detainees’ vital signs.