

Custody immersive learning package launched

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Innovative new training will help to improve safety for people in custody

News 3 mins read

We've launched a new immersive training package for custody sergeants and detention officers. The training will help to reduce the risk of death and adverse incidents in custody, such as injury, medical emergencies and assaults on staff.

Police custody is often where individuals end up as they enter or re-enter the criminal justice system. Policing has a duty to keep all people entering custody safe – particularly the most vulnerable in society – whatever their offence or reason for being there.

In the new training package, learners are immersed in a live custody environment alongside multi-agency partners. They are presented with real-life scenarios, dilemmas and decisions that affect the safety and wellbeing of detainees.

The training provides the skills, confidence and tools to keep everyone in police custody safe. It is available for all police forces in England and Wales to licence and deliver locally.

My big hope for those that do the training is that they leave feeling that they've really been tested. They've really had to stop and really think, that they understand that their decisions and their actions have a direct impact on what happens in custody – and, importantly, the safety of those within custody – and a greater appreciation of their critical role in terms of safety and the running of the custody centre.

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp QPM, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Custody Lead

Video Transcript

A custody officer has tremendous power and influence over the officers that come in, over those that enter custody, and the detainees and their welfare. This is a really important role in policing, so

making sure that the training is good-quality and that it really tests those that are doing it is really important.

Custody plays a pivotal role in the criminal justice system. It's where most people that go into the criminal justice system go through. It's a really important part in terms of supporting officers to actually get the evidence required to take a case to court. Some of the people taken into police custody are extremely challenging and extremely vulnerable. It's not a place that anyone would choose to be and that brings on particular challenges in terms of dealing with people. And where we can de-escalate things in custody, that is always preferable to having to put hands on and have physical confrontation with people.

Apart from the potential harm to the individuals involved, it's really difficult for anyone working within custody having to deal with incidents like that. The impact can be long-lasting, sometimes months or years, so it's really important not to forget the human element at the centre of this, but also the wider impact within custody. So if we can reduce those incidents and make it safer, then that's better for everybody.

This custody training product is a really important step forward in further professionalising the officers and staff that work within custody. And I'm delighted that working with the College of Policing, then we've put together this training package, which is really immersive. I've seen it in action and I was getting really drawn into it.

Some of our partners and stakeholders – so, for example, the Independent Custody Visiting Association – they have been really quite blown away by the standard of the training, but also the demands that are placed on custody officers and custody staff. This training captures all of that. It's supported by chief constables and forces right across the country, has been really well-tested in Merseyside, Hampshire and my own force in Surrey, and I'm really pleased with it. It's a big step forward on professionalising further the officers and staff that work within custody.

The training's been designed to take place in a hydra, but we know that not every force or force area has access to a hydra. So exactly the same scenarios will be used in a classroom environment, and the training in the classroom environment has also been designed to try and make sure it's as absorbing and immersive for those taking part as it would be in the hydra. If you're

doing it in a classroom environment, you're not going to lose any of the learning that you can get from this immersive training.

This has got to be rolled out right across the country. We need subject matter experts in every force area that can actually then train the custody officers and run the training in their forces. In order to achieve that, there are some Training the Trainer events that the College have set up. Those are happening later this year and in early 2023 at College of Policing sites in Ryton and Harperley Hall and others.

So my big hope for those that do the training is that they leave feeling that they've really been tested. They've really had to stop and really think, that they understand that their decisions and their actions have a direct impact on what happens in custody – and, importantly, the safety of those within custody – and a greater appreciation of their critical role in terms of safety and the running of the custody centre.

They will be better custody officers as a result. There's no question about that. And that for me is the important objective here.

Run the training in your force

We're inviting force custody leads and learning and development trainers to one of five 'train the trainer' events. Here you'll learn how to run the immersive learning sessions and train custody officers in your force.

The event dates and locations are:

- Tuesday 4 October – Ryton (Hydra)
- Tuesday 18 October – Ryton (classroom)
- Tuesday 1 November – Harperley Hall (classroom)
- Tuesday 13 December – Harperley Hall (Hydra)
- Tuesday 31 January 2023 – Ryton (Hydra)

You can register your interest for an event using your email address. You'll then be contacted with more information about booking.

Register your interest

Related resources

- [Find out more about immersive learning](#)

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