South Yorkshire Independent Police Custody Scrutiny Panel 23rd September 2026.

Panel Case Review. Analysis of Panel Scores and Free Text Feedback.

Panel members were asked to score 3 questions in relation to each of the cases reviewed (with an opportunity to add free text commentary. Below are a summary of the free text themes and the Panel scores.

Overall Themes

Respectful and professional treatment Panel members consistently highlighted positive interactions between officers and detainees. Across all three cases, comments referred to detainees being treated with dignity, respect and professionalism. Particular praise was given where officers adapted their approach to meet an individual's needs, such as bringing a second female officer to conduct a search when requested and demonstrating understanding during interactions with vulnerable detainees.

Safeguarding and risk management Many respondents recognised that officers were seeking to balance detainee welfare with the need to manage risk. Several comments supported decisions to remove items that could pose a ligature risk or to conduct searches where there was a known history of drug concealment or self-harm concerns. Panel members generally accepted that decisions were made with safety and the best interests of detainees and staff in mind.

Need for stronger justification and recording of decisions The most consistent area for improvement related to the explanation and recording of the rationale for searches. Across each sample, panel members questioned whether custody records sufficiently documented why particular decisions were necessary. While respondents often agreed with the decisions themselves, they felt that the justification recorded on custody logs could have been more detailed and clearer for independent scrutiny purposes.

Case-Specific Narrative

Sample 1: Case 2

Feedback on Case 2 was the most mixed of the three samples. Members were positive about the professionalism shown by officers and particularly welcomed the decision to quickly provide a female officer when requested. Several respondents also commented favourably on the understanding shown towards the detainee.

However, a number of comments questioned whether the rationale for the strip search had been sufficiently explained to the detainee or adequately recorded on the custody record. Some members felt the explanation given was brief and that there was insufficient evidence documented to justify concerns that the detainee posed a risk of self-harm. There were also observations about officer-detainee rapport, with some

suggesting that a different officer appeared more effective at engaging with the detainee. One respondent additionally raised broader questions about officers' understanding of disability and the management of detainees presenting with complex needs.

Sample 2: Case 7

Feedback relating to Case 7 was overwhelmingly positive. Members consistently commented on the respectful treatment of the detainee and noted that processes had been clearly explained to both the detainee and their family member. Respondents generally agreed that the actions taken were intended to protect the welfare of the individual and those involved.

The principal area for discussion centred on the removal of corded clothing. Whilst members largely agreed with the decision, several felt that the rationale should have been more fully articulated within the custody record. Comments suggested that more detail regarding risk assessment and the potential dangers posed by ligatures would have strengthened the transparency of the decision-making process.

Sample 3: Case 10

Case 10 attracted the strongest and most consistently positive feedback. Members were satisfied that the detainee had been treated respectfully, that the search was appropriately explained, and that the rationale for the decision was sound given the detainee's history and the nature of the offence. Several respondents explicitly stated that the search was justified and proportionate in the circumstances.

The only significant observation related to the need for more detailed documentation within the custody record and the quality of CCTV audio available for scrutiny. Members indicated that clearer recording of decision-making would further strengthen confidence in the process for independent observers, despite overall support for the actions taken.

Overall Conclusion

Overall, the free-text feedback indicates that panel members were satisfied that custody staff acted professionally, respectfully and with appropriate regard to detainee welfare. The comments demonstrate broad support for the decisions taken in each case and confidence that safeguarding considerations were central to officers' actions. The primary area identified for improvement was the consistency and detail of recorded rationales, with members repeatedly highlighting the need for custody records to more clearly evidence the justification for searches and other risk-management decisions. Strengthening the recording of decision-making would enhance transparency and provide greater assurance to those undertaking independent scrutiny. Members also noted the need for much clearer audio quality of CCTV to aid scrutiny.

SCORES

KEY

Fair and Respectful	Justified & explained	Impact on confidence
4 = very good treatment	4 = very clear	4 = increased confidence
3 = generally good treatment	3 = mostly clear	3 = no real impact
2 = some concerns	2 = some gaps or uncertainty	2 = reduces confidence a little
1 = significant concerns	1 = poor	1 = reduces confidence significantly

Sample 1 Case 2

Score	Fair and Respectful Treatment (No. of responses)	%	Search justified and explained (No. of responses)	%	Impact on confidence (No. of responses)	%
4	2	22%	3	33%	3	33%
3	5	56%	2	22%	4	44%
2	2	22%	4	44%	2	22%
1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Responses total	9	100%	9	100%	9	100%

Sample 2 Case 7

Score	Fair and Respectful Treatment (No. of responses)	%	Search justified and explained (No. of responses)	%	Impact on confidence (No. of responses)	%
4	7	78%	6	67%	6	67%
3	2	22%	2	22%	3	33%
2	0	0%	1	11%	0	0%
1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Responses total	9	100%	9	100%	9	100%

Sample 3 Case 10

Score	Fair and Respectful Treatment (No. of responses)	%	Search justified and explained (No. of responses)	%	Impact on confidence (No. of responses)	%
4	4	44%	7	78%	8	89%
3	5	56%	2	22%	1	11%
2	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Responses total	9	100%	9	100%	9	100%