

21 November 2016

C80970

Jeremy Roundill
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Dear Mr Roundill

Thank you for your email of 18 October 2016, requesting information about the training provided to staff around strip searches. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Department's overarching vision is to create lasting change by breaking the cycle of re-offending. We place considerable emphasis on preventing contraband from entering prisons, apprehending those who attempt to smuggle it in, and stamping out opportunities for organised crime. These measures all contribute toward our bottom line of improving public safety, and our ultimate goal of reducing re-offending.

Contraband in prisons includes alcohol, communication devices, drugs, drug paraphernalia, tattoo equipment, weapons and other items. Items that are prohibited may include everyday and seemingly innocent items that while not illegal, may be used inappropriately by prisoners.

On 1 July 2011, all prisons became smokefree, and all tobacco and smoking equipment were considered contraband from this date. There are differences in contraband finds between prisons. Factors affecting this include prisoner numbers, the volumes of new arrivals and transits from courts, the profile of the prisoners and their visitors, and the design and layout of the prison and grounds. For example, some prison perimeter fences are close to public roads and prisoners' associates may attempt throw-overs. For these reasons, caution is urged when directly comparing data across prisons. Our intelligence staff are constantly working to identify and mitigate risk areas in the physical environment and to stay informed about new methods of concealment.

The Department currently employs a range of screening methods to prevent contraband, such as tobacco and related products, from entering prisons. These measures include:

- prison perimeter security and limiting the number of entry points to prisons
- camera surveillance in prison visit rooms, perimeter and entry points
- completing background checks on all potential prison visitors

- searches of any vehicle and its occupants entering prison property
- strip searches and reasonable cause strip searches of prisoners
- using scanners and x-ray machines at entry points
- banning visitors who attempt to bring contraband into prisons
- requiring prisoners to wear closed overalls when in visiting areas, to prevent the smuggling of contraband
- prisoner mail and property being subject to checks for contraband
- specialist detector dog teams patrolling prison perimeters, visitor areas, and cells
- identifying and analysing criminal activities in prisons through operational intelligence teams, and
- the Crimestoppers free telephone service (0800 555 111) that enables information about crime to be provided anonymously by offenders, staff, or members of the public.

The power to strip search prisoners is one of Corrections Officers' (officers) most coercive powers and impacts on a prisoner's right to privacy and dignity. However, in appropriate circumstances it is a necessary imposition on those rights to ensure the safety and security of prisoners and staff.

Officers have the power to conduct searches on prisoners, and of their cells, to detect unauthorised items. Under section 98 of the Corrections Act 2004 officers are authorised to carry out scanner searches, rub-down searches and strip searches of prisoners.

Strip searches are carried out when a prisoner is first admitted to a prison, immediately before the prisoner is transferred to another prison, when the prisoner is received in a prison on transfer from another prison, or leaves or returns to or from a prison for outside employment, court appearances, medical appointments, or any other reason in accordance with the Corrections Act 2004.

Searches of prisoners, their property, and the places where they work, sleep and congregate are an important part of our contraband prevention strategy. Searches are a means of finding contraband, and they are also vitally important as a deterrent, as our search policy is designed to deter prisoners and their associates from attempting to introduce contraband into prisons.

You have asked a number of questions relating to the training provided to staff around strip searches and these have been addressed below.

1.1) What kind of training is provided to staff around strip searches?

All custodial staff are trained on strip searches as part of the CODP (Corrections Officer Development Pathway).

There are several components to the training. Since the end of 2012 the training has been moved from a purely classroom based event to a mix of on the job training, classroom and simulated training. This culminates in a simulated assessment.

For strip searching the following takes place:

- A discussion around procedure, policy and legislation
- A video demonstration of a strip search
- A practical application of a rub down with clothes on whilst talking through a strip search
- An on job observation takes place
- Practical application of a strip search with support via an observing experienced officer

1.2) *Are any brochures, worksheets or handouts given to staff surrounding strip searches?*

1.3) *If so, please provide me with all of those documents*

Training documents regarding strip searches include handouts and a video presentation. However, we are unable to release information about the daily procedures in prisons including the training provided to staff around strip searches into the public domain as doing so could compromise the safety of individuals or the security of prisons. Therefore, the requested information is withheld under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the making available of that information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

1.4) *How does Corrections ensure that all staff have the same training around strip searches?*

All custodial staff are trained to the same standard on strip searches as part of the CODP (Corrections Officer Development Pathway).

1.5) *Are staff examined in any way surrounding strip searches as a part of their training? If so, what is the content of that examination?*

As stated above, the training Corrections Officers receive regarding strip searches includes:

- A practical application of a rub down with clothes on whilst talking through a strip search
- An on job observation takes place
- Practical application of a strip search with support via an observing experienced officer

1.6) *Do any of Corrections' contractors carry out strip searches?*

1.6.1) *If so, what training, if any, does Corrections provide to these contractors*

1.6.2) *How are Corrections' contractors monitored to ensure compliance with Corrections' policy on strip searches?*

Corrections' contractors do not carry out strip searches. Therefore, your request for information regarding training and monitoring of contractors is

declined in accordance with section 18(e) of the OIA, as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist.

1.6.3) Please provide all advice received by Corrections regarding compliance of strip searches with human rights legislation and conventions.

Unfortunately, we cannot readily extract all advice received by Corrections regarding compliance of strip searches with human rights legislation and conventions from our electronic records. In order to identify this type of specific information, we would be required to manually review a large number of files.

In accordance with the OIA, we have considered whether to affix a charge or extend the time limit for responding. However, given the scale of the request we do not consider that this would be an appropriate use of our publicly funded resources. Therefore, this part of your request is declined under section 18(f) of the OIA, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Department. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Vincent Arbuckle
Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Services