

**Feedback from police custody**

**Introduction**

The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) leads, supports and represents independent custody visiting schemes across the UK. ICVA is requesting additional feedback from schemes throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. ICVA is sharing this monitoring with national bodies to help to identify strengths and challenges and help to resolve problems.

**Feedback**

The following feedback summarises responses from independent custody visiting schemes from mid-December 2020 to mid-January 2021. ICVA received 29 forms of feedback from 29 police force areas across this time.

Key messages

* Schemes continue to monitor custody in a number of ways across new restrictions on movements. Many are operating more than one form of monitoring. One fifth of respondents continue to visit custody suites. Two thirds are conducting telephone conversations with detainees and a quarter have staff who are completing custody record reviews. Other areas have ICVs conducting custody record reviews, video visits to custody or video interviews with detainees. These decisions are under local review.
* Hygiene appears to have improved, with all but one respondent stating that detainees can access good hygiene (similar to that which they could access outside of custody). However, around a quarter of suites are not offering face coverings upon release.
* Detainees are able to access safeguards including Appropriate Adults and solicitors. One force reported that Niche now prompts custody officers to ask for consent to remote legal advice. However, ICVA has also received concerns that solicitors are not, or are rarely, attending custody in person from two areas.
* More than half of respondents still have some form of video enabled justice (VEJ) in their area. Some of these areas comment that VEJ is reserved for those detainees with COVID19 or displaying symptoms. Some areas note that VEJ continues to be resource intensive, whilst others do not have concerns.
* When asked for comment, one area wanted to see police prioritised for vaccinations. Others raise COVID19 specific concerns including staff resilience, required cleaning and difficulties with ventilation. One area reported delays with court transfers.

**Using feedback**

ICVA has advised schemes to report locally if they have concerns on hygiene and face coverings and to refer to ICVA for further support.

ICVA has reminded schemes that there is a [clear protocol](https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/coronavirus-interview-protocol-between-national-police-chiefs-council-crown) on remote interviews that requires detainees to provide informed consent to remote advice and has asked schemes to monitor whether this takes place and is recorded in custody records. ICVA has also highlighted concerns around solicitors not attending custody to national organisations.