

Independent Custody Visiting Association
Briefing for Independent Custody Visitors
High Profile Incidents - ICV Response
August 2019



Background

In light of recent high profile and group arrests, ICVA has been prompted to consider how custody visiting might respond effectively to incidents where there is a good deal of public attention. High profile arrests place a lot of attention on the police from the public and, case depending, can be incredibly emotive for the police. The treatment of detainees under these circumstances is incredibly important, in particular where there are vulnerable detainees, or where detention times are extended up to 96 hours. Detainees are likely to be under increased stress due to the nature/severity of the crime for which they are being investigated.

Purpose

This briefing is being produced to cover the arrangements that schemes may want to consider at times when there has been a high-profile incident and arrest in your area. This may involve an individual, a group of individuals, vulnerable individuals and/or extended detention times.

What should scheme managers do?

In the case of high-profile arrest(s), ICVA would suggest that schemes increase the frequency of visits to the suite(s) containing the detainees concerned. This not only provides oversight for the detainee and their welfare but can also act as a support to the staff and provide public reassurance regarding detention conditions.

ICVA suggests 5 steps to ensure that schemes can react to high-profile and/or large-scale arrests:

Prepare - Have a list of ICVs who are happy to be called upon for extra visits with contact details to hand. These ICVs should be prepared to see detainees whose alleged offence may be emotive.

Assess - Are additional visits appropriate/required, consider the profile of the arrest and the vulnerability of the detainees to arrive at a decision. **Where there is a high-profile arrest of a child/children, additional/reactive visits should always be arranged.**

Organise – Daily visits should be arranged during the period of detention, (similar to the arrangement for TACT detainees).

Reflect – Scheme managers should consider the reports and ensure that concerns are escalated quickly and effectively, and that good practice is reported back to the force expediently.

Debrief – Check in with your ICVs once detention has ended to ensure that they have an opportunity to offload if required.

What should ICVs do?

Prepare – Check their feelings, normally an ICV wouldn't know the details of an alleged offence, ensure that impartiality and a detainee focus can be maintained.

Prioritise – Ensure that their visits prioritise high profile detainees, prioritising visits to children and detainees with vulnerabilities in the normal way.

Record – Ensure that full notes are recorded of discussions with detainees, the custody record (where it can be viewed) and general notes on the mood/culture of the suite.

Feedback – Positive feedback in times of high-profile arrests can be valuable to police staff, ensure that as well as highlighting areas of concern, feedback of good practice is given at the time of the visit.

Debrief – As ICVs are unable to discuss the visit outside of the scheme due to confidentiality, they should take up the opportunity to have a debrief with their scheme manager once detention has ended.

ICVs should refer to the checklist for high-profile arrests to assist with their visit.

This document has been approved by the National Police Chief Council.