

Independent Custody Visiting Association
Checklist for Independent Custody Visitors and Scheme Managers
Virtual Remand Hearings in Police Custody
April 2020



During the Covid-19 pandemic, police custody suites in many areas are moving to holding Virtual Remand Hearings, (VRHs), which means that a detainee could be remanded via video-link and then be held in police custody until such time as transport can be arranged to the prison estate.

The below represents a brief checklist for ICVs when carrying out visits to this group of detainees and the reporting mechanisms for any concerns/areas of good practice of this specific group.

When you arrive in custody

- Ask the custody staff how many detainees are in custody and how many of those detainees are detained under a court order, post VRH, in custody.
- Prioritise visits to children or vulnerable adults of all detention types.

During your visit

- Check on rights, entitlements and wellbeing as you would for any visit.
- Ask how long the detainee(s) has been in custody, both pre and post VRH.
- Check additional arrangements for remanded prisoners such as:
 - Has the detainee had access to varied food including fresh fruit if the stay is lengthy?
 - Have showers been regularly offered?
 - Has the detainee been offered regular exercise and fresh air?
 - Has the detainee been offered reading materials such as newspapers?
 - Has the detainee been offered nicotine replacements if needed?
 - Has the detainee been able to make additional phone calls if they have caring responsibilities to ensure arrangements are in place?
 - If the detainee is a child or vulnerable adult have visits or varied arrangements been made to lessen the impact of detention? (Arrangements such as additional time with AA/family member, time out of cell etc.).
- Ask the detainee if you are able to check the custody record

When looking at the custody record (with permission)

- Check how long the detainee has been in custody.

- Make a note of the time the VRH was scheduled, was it in the morning to allow time to arrange same day transfer where possible?
- Make a note of the length of time after being remanded that the detainee has been waiting for transfer to prison.
- Does the custody record detail offers of the entitlements above regardless of the detainees acceptance/refusal?

When completing your report

- Note the timing of the VRH, morning or afternoon.
- Note how long the detainee has been in police custody in total and reasons for the length of detention, (including time spent post virtual remand hearing, awaiting transport etc.).
- Report on rights, entitlements and wellbeing as normal.
- Report on whether the detainee has been offered regular showers, daily exercise, newspapers, fresh fruit etc.
- Note if you have not been able to access the custody record and why.
- Note the number of remanded prisoners held in the suite, and the impact on custody staff.