

The Independent Custody Visiting Association represents all independent custody visiting schemes across the UK. Local volunteers (known as independent custody visitors) make unannounced visits to police custody to check on the rights, entitlements and wellbeing of detainees.

The state of custody

Feedback overall was mixed for quarter two. Positively schemes have reported:

- Several reports detail excellent detainee care, including enabling fresh air, distraction items and commenting that staff were very caring toward detainees. One report also states that custody staff were very welcoming and supportive of ICV visits.
- Several reports note good practice in terms of Covid for ICVs and detainees.
- Reports note improved/good stocks of reading materials including religious books.
- Positive reports on Samaritans training custody staff and the uptake and promotion of the Samaritans scheme in custody to detainees who might wish to take up the service.

Schemes have included the following causes for concern in quarter two:

- Several reports received of low staffing, both in terms of custody staff and ICVs in schemes. Some reports of low morale and high turnover in custody staff.
- Continuing reports of poor arrangements for menstrual care for women including poor availability of products, products not being offered on booking in and concern recorded regarding arrangements for women in paper suits who may be menstruating (please note the scheme for the paper suit concern is escalating and continuing work to rectify this concern).
- Two reports citing solicitor non-attendance, and others reporting delays in detainees accessing AA's and medical care.
- Some reports received of out-of-date detainee food and/or problems with kitchens.

The impact of ICVs

ICV schemes have continued to deliver regular, independent monitoring across the pandemic. Their continued presence in custody, whether that is in person or remotely, should be recognised and commended.

ICVs have reported making a difference in several ways:

- Repairs to custody estate made following ICV reports such as showers, signature pads, CCTV and kitchen.

- ICVs have fed back issues with low staff morale and bullying concerns to senior custody staff, both of which have been escalated or actioned.
- Detainee welfare impacted on issues such as blankets, pain relief administered by medical staff, access to showers, reading materials and exercise.

ICVA response

'Quarter three has of course seen the increase in cases of the Omicron variant. Many schemes have continued to visit in this quarter, others quickly reverting to remote monitoring where that was determined to be necessary. This means that despite the rise of Omicron that custody visiting has continued. In response to the concerns recorded in both quarter two and three, ICVA has produced a bitesize training for schemes on 'women in custody' and disseminated to schemes to ensure and focus monitoring in this area.

ICVA remain incredibly proud of the work ICVs undertake and would like to thank them and their scheme managers for their continued dedication in difficult circumstances.'

*Sherry Ralph
ICVA Chief Operating Officer*

Further information

The data for quarter three is incomplete as some schemes have been using a variety of monitoring methods but reveals that in the last quarter ICVs completed at least 1,451 visits, interviewing at least 3,421 detainees. In addition to this there were well in excess of 70 custody record reviews undertaken.

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- ICVA leads, supports and represents local independent custody visiting schemes.
- Further information can be found on our website: www.icva.org.uk