

Introduction

Custody can be an overwhelming and sometimes upsetting place to visit. Detainees might be extremely vulnerable, might disclose difficult information for ICVs to hear and there are many visits that could be difficult for volunteers for a number of reasons. This briefing sets out some things scheme managers might want to consider and some hints and tips for ICVs if they have experienced a difficult/traumatic visit. It is perfectly reasonable for ICVs to find a visit difficult or traumatic and it's important for the ICVs, their peers and scheme managers to acknowledge that ICVs do a difficult job and support each other effectively.

Scheme Managers

Schemes and ICVs should ensure that they have effective mechanisms for professional and personal support in place to ensure that they avoid burn out and are able to offer support if a particular visit was difficult and/or upsetting. When thinking about how to best support your ICVs, you may want to research/consider some of the following (some schemes already have these in place):

- Discuss ICV entitlements with the OPCC human resources department. There are schemes whereby ICVs have access to the employee wellbeing scheme or similar, which can offer counselling, helpline access and more.
- If the OPCC does not have a wellbeing scheme, ask the force if ICVs are able to access a force scheme for counselling support and similar.
- Let your ICVs know when and how they can contact you if they have had a difficult visit, it might help them to chat it through with you if you are able to.
- Develop a wellbeing policy or include information of where your ICVs can get support in the ICV handbook for your scheme.
- Share this briefing with some hints and tips below with your ICVs.
- Share what has worked for your scheme on the members forum – if you have a policy or some good feedback on a resource, share it with your peers.

ICVs

Some things for ICVs to think about/try if a visit was difficult:

- It is really important that you acknowledge that the visit was hard for you and make the time to relax yourself after a stressful experience. The Mind website has some excellent hints and tips on how to relax which might be helpful after a difficult visit, including getting out in nature, breathing tips, music and more – check them out [here](#).
- Practice mindfulness – this is a relatively new term, but the Mind website has lots of information on using mindfulness to de-stress and cope with negative feelings – the explanations and tips can be found [here](#).

- Talk it through – let your ICV partner know that the visit was difficult for you, they might be feeling the same and talking it over could help.
- Talk it through – let your scheme manager know that the visit was a difficult one and see what assistance and support they can offer.
- Talk it through – although there are of course boundaries of confidentiality to adhere to, you can let friends and family know you have had a difficult visit without giving details and let them support you too.
- Most of all, please remember that it's ok not to be ok! Your wellbeing as an independent custody visitor is really important and you should feel comfortable about disclosing that a visit or the role has been, or is, difficult for you.

Other/Crisis help for ICVs

Should ICVs find themselves in crisis at any time due to visiting or life events, there are national helplines to support, here are some details:

- Samaritans. To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact [Samaritans](#) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call [116 123](#) (free from any phone. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line on [0808 164 0123](#) (7pm–11pm every day).
- SANEline. If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call [SANEline](#) on [0300 304 7000](#) (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).
- National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK. Offers a supportive listening service to anyone with thoughts of suicide. You can call the [National Suicide Prevention Helpline UK](#) on [0800 689 5652](#) (open 24/7).
- Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM). You can call the [CALM](#) on [0800 58 58 58](#) (5pm–midnight every day) if you are struggling and need to talk. Or if you prefer not to speak on the phone, you could try the [CALM webchat service](#).
- The Mix. If you're under 25, you can call The Mix on [0808 808 4994](#) (3pm–midnight every day), request support by email [using this form on The Mix website](#) or [use their crisis text messenger service](#).
- Papyrus HOPELINEUK. If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call [Papyrus HOPELINEUK](#) on [0800 068 4141](#) (weekdays 10am-10pm, weekends 2pm-10pm and bank holidays 2pm–10pm), or text [07786 209 697](#).
- Switchboard. If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call [Switchboard](#) on [0300 330 0630](#) (10am–10pm every day), or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.
- C.A.L.L. If you live in Wales, you can call [the Community Advice and Listening Line \(C.A.L.L.\)](#) on [0800 132 737](#) (open 24/7) or you can text 'help' followed by a question to 81066.