

PCCs celebrate the dedication and selflessness of Independent Custody Visitors this Volunteers' Week

Dedicated independent custody visitors have logged over 12,000 hours and delivered over 6,000 visits to police custody suites on behalf of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in the past year.

This Volunteers' Week (1-7 June), PCCs across England and Wales are celebrating the outstanding voluntary work and commitment of Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) and the critical role they play in making police custody transparent and ensuring those detained by the police are treated fairly.

ICVs are members of the public who give up their own time to make unannounced visits to police custody suites. They independently deliver checks on detainees to see if they have been treated fairly, with dignity and are held in conditions that are safe.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners' National Lead for Custody and Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, Emily Spurrell, said: "Independent Custody Visitors are a priceless asset to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), effectively serving as the communities' eyes and ears in police custody. Their observations are key to helping the police to improve, be it ensuring children have access to an appropriate adult, sanitary products are freely available or the custody suite itself is safe. Importantly, their presence also serves to strengthen public trust in policing by making sure officers and staff are doing everything they should be in the custody environment.

"On behalf of all PCCs and Deputy Mayors for policing, I want to say thank you to our amazing ICVs for everything they do. Their tireless commitment to the role is greatly appreciated and I would encourage anyone with an interest in police custody or community voluntary work to look out for volunteering opportunities to join a local scheme."

From April 2022 to March 2023, Independent Custody Visitors across the UK undertook more than 6,500 visits and interacted with over 21,000 detainees. With alternative monitoring provided for over 7,200 people in custody.

Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) who provide dedicated training and support to ICVs, said: "As the national association responsible for the ICV schemes, we regularly receive reports of where independent custody visiting volunteers have made positive changes to custody and where issues in detainee care and wellbeing have been highlighted and remedied.

"These reports show the validity and necessity of the custody visiting model and the tireless commitment by the volunteers. The hard work and dedication to detainee rights, entitlements and wellbeing is admirable and the coverage the volunteers provide is vast. The Board and I are very proud to represent Independent Custody Visitors this Volunteers' Week and every week."

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