

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

### **The state of custody**

Positively, schemes reported:

- Report of a social Worker being allowed to sit in the cell with a child detainee during their detention.
- Detention officers are regularly highlighted in the ICV reports as helpful, positive and well-mannered with the detainees.
- Forwarding of the ICVA newsletters to the Custody Inspectors and the Custody Nurse – The custody nurse advised this was important for them to reflect on those cases which are likely to occur in our cells. Guidance is then circulated from the custody nurse to her fellow healthcare professionals. And forms part of the weekly custody newsletter that is sent out to all custody staff.
- ICVs encountered a detainee who would not eat or drink as they believed the police were putting something into the food and drink. Custody staff were reported as being very patient and offered to escort the individual to the kitchen so they could see the food and drink being prepared and carry them back to the cell himself. They were very grateful, and this gave them the confidence to take what was offered.
- ICVs in one area reporting observing a CDO with a very emotional and inebriated detainee, commenting that the CDO's attitude and care was exceptional, explaining photograph procedure etc. taking them a drink and reassuring them. Very commendable.
- Religion bitesize training from ICVA was sent to Custody, so they could understand that religious texts should be stored on the same level and not stacked on top of each other, which is something ICVs were continuously reporting. Custody have now ensured that all texts are on the same level, certain religious materials are wrapped accordingly and treated with care.
- Mobile phone chargers being purchased to charge detainee phones on release from custody (safeguarding detainees' onward journeys).

Causes for concern reported by schemes included:

- Several reports of staffing issues in healthcare impacting on detainee welfare and access to medical staff, including one detainee who was unassessed and had a seizure in custody, a detainee needing to be transferred to attain medical assessment and general staffing concerns.
- Staffing levels of custody staff we also reported as a concern this quarter, with reports noting that delays on reviews were arising as a result of the issue, ICVs having to conduct visits via the cell hatch and unacceptable delays to ICV visits.

- Lengthy handcuffing of one detainee. This was raised with the force and is being investigated.
- One area recorded concerns with the levels of vulnerability being recorded in their area, triggering the appropriate adult safeguard. They have noted that there is currently work underway to look at this in more detail, benchmark against other forces and a recommendation paper to be produced.
- ICVs in one area have been advised not see some DPs because of language barrier, this is not an acceptable reason for ICVs to be denied access to a detainee as per the Home Office Code of Practice for Custody Visiting.
- There were two reports this quarter of detainees not being made effectively aware of the pixelation of toilet areas. This is important for detainee dignity and has been raised in the relevant areas.
- One report noted a concern in that a detainee was given anti-rip clothing of an inappropriate size to wear, leading to the detainee inadvertently exposing themselves whilst walking and feeling degraded by the incident. The force have taken steps to ensure that there is a range of sizing of the clothing where it is considered appropriate for use.

### **The impact of ICVs**

ICVs have reported making a difference in several ways, some of which are:

- On finding a detainee was not able to read rights and entitlements due to being dyslexic, ICVs reported to the Inspector who very quickly resolved matter, so we now have various coloured overlays in all custody suites. This is now embedded in all custody suites.
- ICVs reported issues gaining entry into a custody suite stating that the call buzzer was non-operational and resorted being on hold via 101 for a significant period of time in an attempt to prompt someone from within to allow them entry. This issue was raised with local inspector, who immediately rectified the necessary repairs via the Estates team. This feedback proved to be advantageous to on call solicitors and Appropriate Adults attending the custody.
- ICVs in one area noted that there was no stock of sanitary pads, as a detainee stated that they could not use tampons. This was addressed immediately and stocks were ordered straight away, pads were sourced from a response police vehicle for the detainee to ensure that the detainee was not left without any sanitary products.
- This quarter sees a wide range of estates concerns in particular being identified by ICVs and addressed by forces, these include but are not limited to resolving an unpleasant smell in custody, floor levelling for health and safety reasons and water led in corridors.

### **ICVA response**

*“Once again, we see the theme in the reporting from schemes around healthcare staffing issues in particular, which has been a thematic issue for some time. This is an ongoing area of concern which ICVA have shared with stakeholders from the NHS, Home Office and National Police Chiefs Council and will continue to raise. Where singular issues occur such as those with access to detainees being refused due to*

*language barriers, ICVA provides individual advice and guidance to the scheme, to be shared with the force to ensure that this practice is not widespread.*

*We consistently read reports of good practice by detention officers in terms of their interactions with both detainees and ICVs. We are very pleased to share some previously unreported areas of good practice, such as providing mobile phone chargers to detainees to ensure their phones have charge on release and providing coloured overlays to detainees with dyslexia to ensure the accessibility of rights and entitlements materials.'*

*We are also delighted this quarter to see ICVA resources being shared with other custody stakeholders such as the religious items bitesize and newsletters to improve practice across custody. Although our resources are specifically designed for our membership, we are very happy that they have a wider use/impact to improve custody."*

*Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive Officer, ICVA.*

### **Further information**

The data returns for Q2 are incomplete, however, ICV schemes conducted at least 1488 visits, interviewing at least 5142 detainees.

If you have any comments or questions about this report, please get in touch via the email address below.

info@icva.org.uk

ICVA leads, supports and represents local independent custody visiting schemes.

Further information can be found on our website: [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)