

Introductions of ICVs to Detainees
A briefing for ICVs and Schemes
December 2023



Introduction

ICVA has created this briefing following feedback from schemes identifying a correlation between how ICVs are introduced to detainees and rates of refusal of visits. ICVA sent out a short survey to ask schemes how their ICVs are currently being introduced and what they have found to be useful wording and what has been less useful. This includes data from schemes where the staff introduce ICVs and where ICVs do self-introductions.

Data

ICVA collected data from schemes nationally asking the following questions:

1. How do the Force introduce your ICVs currently?
2. What are some good examples of wording in introductions used that has been helpful?
3. What are some examples of wording in introductions that has been *less* helpful?

The briefing below has been based on and informed by the answers provided in response to these questions. Please note that this is merely suggested guidance through examples. How your scheme operates and does ICV introductions may differ.

Useful Introduction Examples

It is helpful to be as transparent as possible about who you are and why you are there. Further, reiterating that you are independent from the police and using plain and clear language is important. Keeping in mind body language and tone when introducing can also make a difference. Ensuring there is open body language and using a kind, genuine tone can also make a difference in refusal rates. Please see below a number of useful introductions suggested by ICVs across the UK:

“I have with me two Independent Custody Visitors, who are trained volunteers from the local community. They are nothing to do with the police and they do not know your name or why you are here. They are here to ensure that you are being looked after properly. The visitors would like to speak with you for a few minutes and ask you some questions about how you have been treated. Are you happy to speak to them?”

“Hi, we are Independent Custody Visitors who are members of public and nothing to do with the police, we are here to check on your welfare since you have been in custody. Would you be happy to speak with us?”

*“Good morning / afternoon / evening / Hello,
My name is ___ and my colleague ___. We are nothing to do with the Police or the judicial system. We are Independent Custody Visitors, coming to Police stations unannounced to check on your welfare. Are you happy to chat for a few minutes?”*

Less Useful Introduction Examples

Please see below a number of introductions that have been deemed unhelpful and why:

“How's it going today?” This way of starting off an introduction may agitate a detainee slightly as it is evidently not going well due to their current situation. This may lead the detainee to become frustrated and less likely to want to talk.

“I've got two ICVs who'd like a word with you.” This phrasing is oversimplified and does not explain what an ICV is (they are unlikely to be familiar with the acronym) and the tone is somewhat intimidating.

“... But you don't have to speak to them.” Finishing an introduction with this may be leading. Someone held in police custody is likely tired and not sure why you are there even if introduced appropriately especially if it is their first time in custody. Giving them a leading question like this may cause them to be more likely to decline. Please see above for a more positive way to ask this question.

How to Implement

If you are being introduced in a manner that you do not believe will be conducive to a productive visit or believe may be leading in some way, you may wish to take the member of staff to one side and politely let them know. If you are unsure about challenging staff on this, please see ICVA's bitesize training on assertiveness [here](#). If this fails and the manner of introduction continues to be unhelpful, then raise this with your scheme manager who can take the issue further by for example discussing at a panel meeting or circulating this briefing amongst custody staff.