

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.

Each quarter, we ask schemes to report data on the number of visits, but also that they include detail of positive news from custody, causes of concern and areas where ICVs have had impact. This allows ICVA to pull together this stakeholder update, including areas which particularly stand out for comment/interest, or areas which are reported by multiple members.

### **The state of custody overall**

Positively, schemes reported:

- Music on in background at booking in desk. ICVs noted this provided a calming environment for custody.
- A report was received of a detainee with a detention time 18+ hours. Neurodiverse person (multiple health issues including arthritis) with double mattress and a safety blanket. Arresting officers packed an overnight bag for person which is encouraged by custody sergeant where possible. ICVs impressed with extent of effort from custody officers to make the person as comfortable as possible.
- New protocol of additional staff during early - late handover being utilised to visit each cell, offering person detained the opportunity for a shower, in-cell washing items and/or exercise area. This was piloted at one site for trial and rolled out across 5 centres.
- Two reports were received concerning arrangements for scheme managers being involved in custody stakeholder meetings or having a single point of contact for custody, meaning that issues or areas of good practice can be reported and any resultant actions taken expediently.
- Police working on a 'pilot' scheme which forms part of a broader approach children and women in custody. The pilot aims to address the number of children coming into custody, force wide, in regard to practice and culture with the overarching aim of reducing children in custody. The scheme also recognises the findings of the Baird Inquiry and considerations from Baird will also be included in the pilot. Police plans for a dedicated wing for women and children at Custody Suite and the scheme will share project outlines and results with ICVA.
- A new pilot with in-cell technology underway, with additional cell decoration, signage for L and D services and notices by cell buzzers giving detainees reminders of rights and entitlements. Work being undertaken by the force and Dr Layla Skinns.

Causes for concern reported by schemes included:

- There were multiple concerns raised regarding the appropriate adult (AA) safeguard. Concerns specifically included a lack of coverage during the evening or late at night, custody delays in requesting an AA, differences in assessments of vulnerability from healthcare resulting in no AA and shortages of AAs due to recruitment issues.
- Staffing continues to be a reported issue, with schemes reporting the impact of low staffing on the availability of exercise and showers for detainees, wait times for ICVs to access custody and the duration of visits. Staffing concerns for healthcare also continue to be reported.
- Immigration Detainees - Inconsistent identification of vulnerability. HCP, A.A. and legal advisor allocation to person does not reflect the same rates of allocation as with the non-immigration community in police custody. Work is on-going by the scheme in collaboration with custody.
- A mixed overview is given of custody records, with some reports of good quality records reflecting good practice, but other overviews reporting issues with the custody record contents regarding lack of detail around de-escalation tactics used with detainees in anti-rip clothing, concerns around custody records being inaccurate or not updated in real time and a concern about the recording of handover information.

### **The impact of ICVs**

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

- A detainee was distressed regarding her 10-month-old puppy which they had informed staff of when first in custody. ICVs raised this and it was confirmed that the house had been visited by police and fed. The DP was immediately informed of this by the CDO.
- ICVs raised a concern about a young detainee having been given a rights & entitlements booklet aimed for an adult. This resulted in the Force producing more booklets aimed at younger detainees and restarted a conversation with custody management about the use of tablets in custody.
- ICVs are continuing to feedback concerns on staffing, which has been instrumental in pushing for an uplift of custody staff. ICVs will continue to report on this and an update to the Commissioner's report to the Chief Constable will be written as part of the monitoring process. It is hoped that in one year's time staffing will be in a much better position thanks to ICV pressuring the force.
- From ICV reporting, the shower/in-cell/wash item pilot was initiated at one custody centre and now rolled out across force.
- NHS Breathing Exercise is being added to the menopause packs to assist with management of stress and anxiety. Breathing exercise wall art has been produced and is being considered for adding to the holding areas as the cells were felt to be too vulnerable to wall art being damaged.

### **ICVA response**

*"Staffing, variable arrangements for the appropriate adult safeguard and inconsistencies in the quality of recording in custody records remain concerns in this*

*quarters extensive feedback from monitors. ICVA continues to raise these issues with national stakeholders.*

*There are several important pilots being undertaken in various forces to enhance the care for and wellbeing of vulnerable detainees which present opportunities for sharing across forces and the wider embedding of good practice models.*

*The value of ICVs is again clear this quarter, with some excellent examples of where impact has been achieved, from individual detainees receiving reassurance or services, through to force wide pilots being put in place to ensure the entitlements of detainees being effectively and proactively offered. The value of the ICV role cannot be underestimated, and ICVA gives thanks to the c1,300 volunteers who give up their time to perform this incredibly important monitoring role, resulting in real changes for detainees”.*

*Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive Officer, ICVA.*

**Further information**

ICV schemes conducted at least 1855 visits in Q2, interviewing at least 6,960 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)