

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

Positively, schemes reported:

- There were many reports of custody staff being welcoming of the ICVs and good care from staff to detainees, in particular with notes on supporting vulnerable detainees at risk of self-harm, those who were experiencing prolonged periods in custody awaiting court and overall reports of well-run suites.
- One scheme reported that the force has just rolled out mobile data terminals for DOs to record welfare checks on DPs straight away rather than having to go back to a computer to record. This has increased efficiency within the block enabling staff to spend more time supporting colleagues and staff available to show ICVs round when visiting.
- The Child-First Custody Training and Research Pilot is demonstrating strong influence on children in custody in one area. The pilot hoped to reduce the number of children going into the Criminal Justice system by using more Out of Court Disposals. The area has seen a reduction in detention times for children. In one suite this has reduced from 17hrs to 7hrs. Both suites in the pilot have seen an increase in refusal for detention of children.
- At least two areas are showing detainees videos about their rights and entitlements in custody, either via tablets or in cell technology.
- In one area custody have introduced a question re neurodiversity which has now been incorporated into Niche. This is seeing more AA referrals and identification of neurodiversity.

Causes for concern reported by schemes included:

- A total of 11 reports from our membership have been received on inappropriate delays for ICVs to enter custody, sometimes leading to abandoned visits. ICVs should be admitted to the custody area immediately

unless there is an immediate risk as per the Code of Practice. Please see the quote below from ICVA's CEO on this issue.

- Staffing of both custody and healthcare staff were again reported by ICVA members, this is an ongoing issue in many suites, and we have raised with the NPCC and Healthcare partners.
- ICVs noted that all beds and toilet facilities are very low for older and other detainees with mobility issues. If a disabled toilet is required (with additional handlebars), the DPs have to press the cell call button and wait for staff to accompany them to the single disability welfare unit within the suite. The Force have advised that thick mattresses are available to accommodate those with low beds and were purchased when the suite re-opened in April.
- ICVs recorded a good deal of maintenance issues this quarter, those ranging from CCTV working properly to issues with sinks working, cleanliness and intercoms/cell bells.
- Some reports were received of delays to Appropriate Adults attending custody and being identified as needed for detainees. These are being escalated locally where there are issues reported.

The impact of ICVs

- As a result of continuous ICV reports about the storage of religious items, the Inspector has implemented detention officers to be in charge of certain areas around custody, to ensure these areas are being kept correctly. Two other reports on storage and condition of religious items were received where ICVs have ensured improvements were made.
- In one area, a supplier has been changed for distraction items due to ICVs raising a lack of distraction items on a number of occasions.
- ICVs in one area are highlighting the Neurodivergent detainees they are seeing in custody and are speaking to custody staff about their understanding of Neurodivergence. This is helping the OPCC to get a better understanding of ways to better support neurodivergent detainees.
- In relation to dignity and respect, following focus by ICVs we are seeing a vast reduction in detainees who have not been provided toilet roll without asking for it.
- There are a number of reports where ICVs have had an impact on maintenance issues, leading to safer, cleaner and better suites for both detainees and staff.

ICVA response

"This quarter we were very concerned to read of the number of reports pertaining to ICV visits being delayed or abandoned. This likely correlates with ongoing reports of staffing concerns in custody, however, being short staffed is not an acceptable reason for not allowing a monitoring visit to take place.

ICVA was delighted to work with the National Police Chiefs Council custody lead, Chief Constable Ivan Balhatchet and his staff officer Simon Barnes, who responded quickly and positively to ICVA raising the issue. Within hours of reporting the issue, a letter was sent to all forces from the NPCC custody lead reminding them of the duty

held in the Home Office Code of Practice for forces to enable visits from ICVs. You can see a copy of this letter [here](#).

We are incredibly grateful to the NPCC for their swift action on this matter, have shared with our members and will continue to monitor ICVs reports in this and all other areas.”

Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive Officer, ICVA.

Further information

ICV schemes conducted at least 1,820 visits in Q1, interviewing at least 6,745 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