

Independent Custody Visiting

# Annual report 2023–24



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# Introductions

## Sarah Taylor, Norfolk Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)



Shortly after being elected, I met an Independent Custody Visitor. It was the first time I had had chance to find out about the need for these visits and the work that our volunteer visitors do. Giving up their time, at any time of the day or night, pairs of volunteers visit Norfolk's Police Investigation Centres (PICs) unannounced to check on the welfare of detainees and to make sure that their rights are being upheld.

As policing is done by consent, the public must have confidence in the way that the police hold detainees. The work done by our ICVs is therefore critical if the public are to have confidence in how the police hold detainees and consequently, as PCC I have a statutory duty to manage an Independent Custody Visiting scheme. As such I am pleased to present this Annual Report.

Since that first meeting, I have welcomed one of our newest volunteer visitors and have met one of our volunteers who has dedicated more than 25 years to this service. There is an enormous amount of knowledge and experience in the ICV team in Norfolk, which is of real benefit to the Constabulary and to people detained as it means the team is constantly on the lookout for ways that things can be improved. For our volunteers to commit to this service for so many years, speaks to the level of satisfaction that they derive from it. I suspect that the amount of satisfaction has a direct relationship to the demands made of them and I have to acknowledge that those demands are not small.

I asked Simon, the member of the OPCC team who manages this scheme, how he would summarise this commitment, "the visitors turn up and really do a great job – they will see detainees on each visit, many of whom are in crisis or distress, checking they are comfortable, have had their rights and importantly take an interest in their situation and be an advocate for them. Getting them a cup of tea or extra blanket can make a huge difference to their time in detention. They also make sure the Constabulary are doing their job, and regularly highlight real issues that need addressing. They show up to Panel meetings, they turn up to training three times a year, they do their vetting, they do their mandatory training, they phone me, email or message me to ask questions and just stay on as ICVs for the duration ... I'm not sure how you'd summarise that, but it's about volunteering spirit and passion for their role that makes them stay."

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank every one of the independent custody visiting team who make such a positive contribution to this important part of policing.

I hope that this report does justice to that commitment, and I am looking forward to getting to better know the ICV team and their important work over the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Sarah Taylor**  
Norfolk Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)



## Paul Sanford, Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary

I would like to thank the Independent Custody visitors for their continued commitment to the provision of service for people in our Police Investigation Centers. Their voluntary work to help the Constabulary manage and safeguard detainees in this county is second to none.

The innovative independent scrutiny panel is a vital part of this service and I continue to be proud that we are the pioneers in this area to help to drive best practice nationally. It is also pleasing to see their work driving schemes like Operation Nova, WONDER+ and Menopause support being offered to people in custody.

The visitors have once again provided a fantastic service throughout the year for which I am very grateful and I look forward to seeing what will be achieved over the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Sanford', written over a light grey circular background.

**Paul Sanford**  
Chief Constable, Norfolk Constabulary



## Chief Inspector Rob Wicks, Head of Custody for Norfolk & Suffolk Constabularies

As of Head of Custody for Norfolk and Suffolk I remain extremely impressed by the way that detained persons across the six Police Investigation Centres (PICs) have been cared for and managed. The past year has enabled several improvements in the provision of detainee care and management, including increased opportunity for liaison and diversion intervention and the introduction of child specific cells. Norfolk and Suffolk remain at the forefront of innovation and are seen as an exemplar collaboration for managing detained persons with dignity, decency and respect.

Throughout my time as the Head of Custody I have had a very healthy relationship with the PCC's office, especially evidenced by the close working relationship I have with the excellent cohort of Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs).

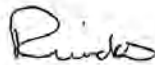
Custody continues to develop and improve. I am constantly impressed with the considered, pragmatic and friendly way in which the ICVs provide appropriate feedback to me and my wider command. I am truly grateful for the time given to ensure that my team are able to provide the best possible custody provision to all users.

My annual attendance at the ICV conference has helped identify areas for improvement that I have developed over the last 12 months. Norfolk and Suffolk Joint Custody is one of the first nationally to have bespoke care packages for those going through the Menopause. I am also currently engaging with the Scheme Manager to review and generate best practice for the appropriate detention of transgender detainees.

My quarterly meetings with the Scheme Manager enable me to share information relating to custody development and gain a real insight into the lived experiences of detained persons. Information of this nature is so invaluable when looking to continually learn and develop custody, which remains an essential area of business for policing.

The ICVs are a critical part in the independent scrutiny panel which is used to review the use of rip proof clothing, strip search and more recently instances where children or young persons are remanded in custody overnight. The independent scrutiny panel remains one of very few such groups nationally and has been identified as best practice. The fantastic work in Norfolk has meant that all Constabularies nationwide have been advised to follow our example.

Norfolk is lucky to have such a committed team of ICVs, and it has been a pleasure to work with you all.



**Rob Wicks**  
Head of Custody  
for Norfolk & Suffolk Constabularies

## Background & Legal Framework

The large-scale civil unrest seen across the country during 1981, and the subsequent Public Enquiry and report by Lord Scarman was a watershed moment for the accountability of the British police. It led to a new code of conduct in the introduction of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act and also created an independent police complaints body, known today as the [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#), in a bid to restore public confidence in the Police.

Prior to the publication of the Scarman Report, no process existed for the independent monitoring of the welfare of detainees held in police custody. He recommended that provision be made for random checks by people other than police officers on the interrogation and detention of suspects in police stations, ensuring all policing activity was accessible and transparent to scrutiny by the public.

Custody Visiting, formerly known as Lay Visiting, was established in 1983 and was initially a voluntary process until the Police and Crime Act 2002 made it a statutory requirement, with the Home Office introducing the [Codes of Practice for Independent Custody Visiting](#).

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 created the position of Police and Crime Commissioners and today they have the responsibility for operating and overseeing an effective and efficient scheme in their police area.

Today, the UK is also party to the [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(OPCAT\)](#). This is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen the protection of people deprived of their liberty through a system of regular, independent visits to places of detention that serves as an important safeguard against abuses, and to prevent torture and ill-treatment in places that by their very nature are hidden from public view.

ICV Schemes are an important part of our [National Preventative Mechanism \(NPM\)](#), the body that oversees the regulation of all detention settings which exists to ensure our adherence to OPCAT. It is made up of twenty-one statutory bodies that monitor places of detention across the UK, including:

- > prisons and young offender institutions
- > police custody
- > escort and court custody services
- > children in secure accommodation and other detention settings
- > detention under Mental Health Law
- > deprivation of liberty and other safeguards in health and social care
- > immigration detention
- > military detention
- > customs custody facilities
- > detention under the Terrorism Act.

## Custody Visitors

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to visit people detained at a police station. This can be people arrested by the police or other agencies such as the Border Force, HM Revenue & Customs and persons detained on behalf of HM Prison Service.

For many people, arriving in a custody suite can be a daunting and frightening experience with many being unaware of their rights or entitlements.

An ICV's main responsibility is to check on the welfare of a detainee and make sure they are being treated properly and with dignity whilst in custody. An ICV ensures that they understand their rights and entitlements in law, why they are in custody, that they have access to free legal advice, and that they can contact someone to inform them of their whereabouts.

In addition, they also make sure detainees have had sufficient refreshments as well as access to showers and exercise and that any healthcare needs have been met.

Visiting in pairs, ICVs can inspect cells and other facilities within the custody suite. Where appropriate, they can scrutinise custody records, the record of everything that happens to a detainee whilst in custody. If an ICV discovers any issues, these are initially raised with the Custody Sergeant and there are additional steps that can be taken should the issue be more serious in nature.

ICVs make a report of each visit to the police station summarising their meetings with detainees, any issues discovered, and any ongoing actions required. A copy of the report is then forwarded onto the Scheme Manager.

ICVs are recruited by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk (OPCCN) but are independent of Norfolk Constabulary. They will make unannounced visits to police stations at any time or day of the week and can speak to anyone who is currently detained within the custody suite.



## The Custody Estate

The custody facilities for Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies are provided collaboratively and all staff work within a combined command headed by a Chief Inspector. In total, across both counties, there are six dedicated Police Investigation Centres (PICs) where detained persons are held.

Four of these are in Norfolk and are situated in Aylsham, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Wymondham, providing a total detainee capacity of 92.

Built in 2011, they are acknowledged as some of the best facilities in the country. Their maintenance, cleaning and supplies are all provided under the Private Finance Initiative Scheme (PFI). The current service providers are [Tascor Facilities Management](#).

The Great Yarmouth PIC serves both Norfolk & Suffolk policing areas with staff from both Constabularies working within the PIC.

The King's Lynn PIC also serves the Cambridgeshire Constabulary area, with detainees from that County being held there, albeit it is fully resourced by Norfolk officers and police staff.



## Detained Persons statistics: 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

### Overall numbers of detainees

Police Investigation Centre	Detainee numbers
Aylsham	1,940
Great Yarmouth	2,884
King's Lynn	3,876
Wymondham	5,725
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>14,425</b>

### Ethnicity of detainees

Ethnicity	Number of detainees	Percentage of overall detainees
White – North European	12,180	84.4%
White – South European	434	3.0%
Black	642	4.5%
Asian	206	1.4%
Middle Eastern	48	0.3%
Chinese, Japanese or South-East Asian	47	0.3%
Unknown/not stated	868	6.0%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>14,425</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Gender and age of detainees

Age profile	Male	Female	Not recorded	Grand total
0–9	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0
10–17	861 (6.0%)	229 (1.6%)	5 (0.0%)	1095
18–25	2,159 (15.0%)	433 (3.0%)	4 (0.0%)	2,596
26–35	3,445 (23.9%)	791 (5.5%)	2 (0.0%)	4,238
36–45	2,812 (19.5%)	736 (5.1%)	3 (0.0%)	3,551
46–55	1,484 (10.3%)	354 (2.5%)	4 (0.0%)	1,842
56–65	667 (4.6%)	117 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	784
Over 65	267 (1.9%)	49 (0.3%)	3 (0.0%)	278
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>11,695 (81.1%)</b>	<b>2,709 (18.8%)</b>	<b>21 (0.1%)</b>	<b>14,425</b>



## Norfolk ICV scheme

As of 31 March 2024, there are 24 ICVs across the county and we have had a number of younger persons joining the Scheme ensuring the overall makeup maintains a good representation of the local community, taking account of different ethnic origin, gender, disability and age.

There is real dedication and commitment from our volunteers with some choosing to stay in their roles for many years, with the current average of six and a half years of service. We also have several interested parties wishing to join the Scheme as and when a vacancy arises.

The ICVs are split into four panel groups, each one serving one of the PICs. Each panel nominates a coordinator who is responsible for arranging a rota of visits. This ensures that only our ICVs know what day and time a visit will take place enabling the scheme to remain independent and credible.

Each panel group meets with the Scheme Manager three times per year, and these meetings are also attended by the PIC Inspector to allow the panel to discuss any issues that they have, and for the Inspector to update the panel with regard to any pertinent issues within their area of responsibility. The panel meetings are also an opportunity to discuss topical issues and provide an opportunity for some training for the ICVs.



## Norfolk ICVs data

### ICVs gender

Gender	Number
Male	8
Female	16

### ICVs with a disability

Disability	Number
Disability	2

### Ages of ICVs

Age	Number
18–30	2
31–45	2
46–60	5
61–74	11
75+	4

### ICVs ethnic group

This table compares the ethnic groups of current ICVs with Norfolk data from the 2021 census.

Norfolk ICVs ethnic group	Number	Norfolk population ethnic group
White British	22 (92%)	88.9%
White Other	0 (0%)	5.2%
Asian	0 (0%)	2.1%
Black/Black British	1 (4%)	0.9%
Other: any other ethnic group	1 (%)	2.9%

# Visiting summary

## Breakdown of visits: 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Not all detainees are available to visit. The police may advise not for health and safety reasons. Additionally, they may be in an interview, asleep or providing fingerprint or DNA samples or not wish to be seen.

In this data, if a detainee declines a visit or they are seen sleeping or resting, this is classed as an observation. The total number of visits include where ICVs have to abandon due to operational commitments.

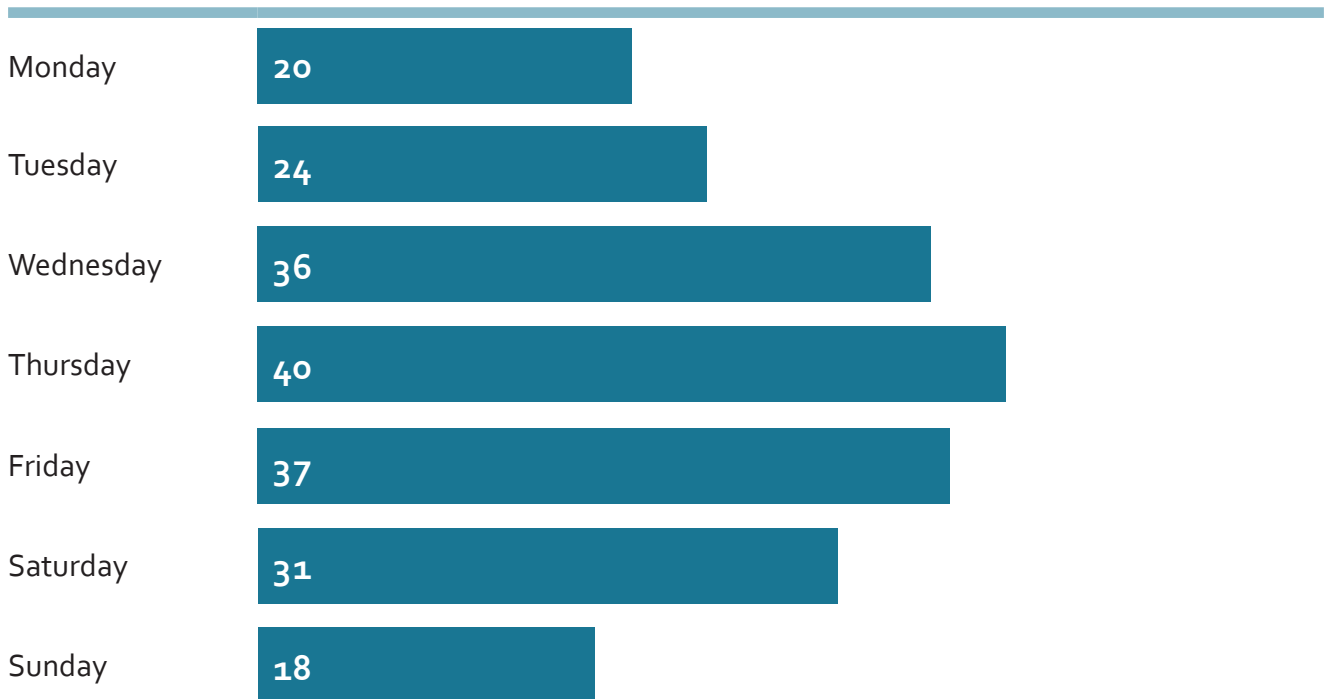
Visiting metric	Year	Aylsham	Great Yarmouth	King's Lynn	Wymondham	Total
Number of visits	23/24	51	54	51	50	206
	22/23	51	49	52	50	202
Detainees available to visit	23/24	87	129	130	180	526
	22/23	94	155	133	188	570
Detainees visited	23/24	79	121	124	162	486
	22/23	86	140	128	159	513
Percentage of available detainees visited	23/24	93%	94%	95%	90%	92%
	22/23	91%	90%	96%	85%	90%
Detainees observed	23/24	21	135	67	173	396
	22/23	18	96	79	130	323



## Days and times visits took place

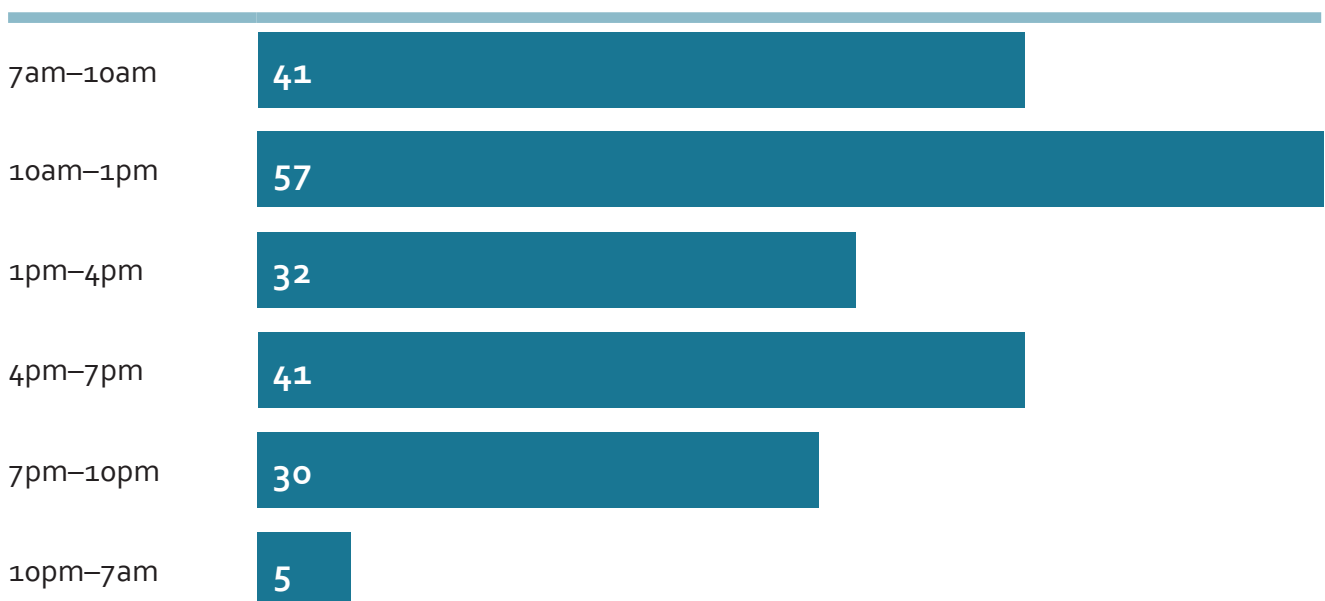
### Days of the Week

#### Day of the week Visits



### Time of day

#### Time of day Visits



# Protecting vulnerable detainees

## Protecting juveniles and other vulnerable persons

Norfolk Constabulary continue to take positive steps to reduce the number of children and vulnerable detainees in custody and there are various strategies in place to achieve this. The Scheme Manager reviews the relevant data, and it is discussed in regular meetings with the Head of Custody. For those children who are detained, efforts are made to ensure they remain segregated and receive age-related care.

An enduring concern is the number of persons held who are mentally unwell, and custody is often a place of last resort whilst a hospital place is sought. Sadly, nationally there are too few beds available but the PCC and senior officers from the Constabulary continue to lobby for better provision. Over the last year improvements have been made by ensuring those with poor mental health, where appropriate, go direct to hospital at the point of arrest. When ICVs encounter such a detainee, they will report back detailed information around their custody and the process to move them onto a specialist setting.

Inevitably, there remains the need to deal with vulnerable people in custody, and the aim is to ensure they leave in a healthier position than when they arrived, being better equipped to change their behaviours and lifestyle choices and are provided with relevant support to do so. There are various diversion and support services available to detainees through partnership working and these are based upon individual need and vulnerability.

## NHS Liaison and Diversion

NHS Liaison and Diversion (L&D) Services work to identify vulnerable adults and young people when they first come into contact with the criminal justice system, often through being held in police custody. L&D staff assess the persons needs and, where possible direct them to the appropriate health and social care services. They help support the individual through the early stages of the Criminal Justice System. It also provides an opportunity to identify any additional needs the individual may have and for which they may not be currently receiving support. The aim is to improve health outcomes for people, help to divert people from reaching crisis point and to reduce reoffending. In Norfolk, the service provides full-time staff to work across all the PICs.

## Op Nova

Norfolk Constabulary continues to support Op Nova. This is delivered by the Forces Employment Charity and commissioned by NHS England, provides support for veterans who are in contact with the justice system, enabling them to access the services they need including housing, employment, support, counselling etc

## The WONDER+ Project

The [Women Offenders of Norfolk, Diversion, Engagement and Rehabilitation \(WONDER\)](#) service is a Whole System Approach (WSA) to rehabilitating female offenders and supporting women at risk of offending, funded by the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk County Council Public Health and the [St Giles Trust](#).

The service aims to divert women offenders and those at risk of offending away from the criminal justice system by providing targeted intervention to address the issues which make them more likely to offend.

## Child Detainees

Norfolk Constabulary recognises the impact that trauma informed policing can have on young people and has undertaken to improve the facilities available for young people visiting custody. Certain cells have been designated at each PIC solely for juvenile use that are quieter and are naturally lit. These are clearly identified by coloured doors, with a commission to add entertainment decals into the cells, such as targets for footballs to be thrown at. A selection of age-appropriate activities and reading materials are provided along with a small selection of cuddly toys. The use of a separate booking in area has also been implemented to reduce young people's exposure to detained adults.

## Menopause

Norfolk Constabulary are one of the first forces to fully implement support for female DPs suffering with the menopause, with signposting to support agencies through L&D, a dedicated female staff member, and access to a selection of different products, such as lip balms and fans to make their stay in custody more comfortable.



## Vulnerable persons – overview

The ICVs will always prioritise seeing vulnerable people during their visits, especially when custody is busy, and they are unable to see all detainees.

If ICVs are unable to see a detainee due to that vulnerability, then they are able to review their custody record on their behalf to ensure that all of their rights and entitlements are being upheld and that they are receiving appropriate care.

If ICVs are unable to see a detainee because they have refused a visit, the police have advised not to for health and safety reasons, they are in an interview, asleep or providing fingerprint or DNA samples, then the ICVs will always endeavour to make a safe observation of them.

### Vulnerable person overview

Category	Year	Juvenile	Non-English-speaking	Female
Number of detainees at time of visit	23/24	62	89	210
	22/23	42	77	158
Detainees available to visit	23/24	36	29	107
	22/23	25	31	85
Detainees visited	23/24	33	28	95
	22/23	23	29	79
Percentage visited	23/24	92%	97%	89%
	22/23	92%	94%	93%

# The Terrorism & National Security Act

Anyone arrested under the [Terrorism Act 2000 \(TACT\)](#) or the recently introduced [National Security Act 2023 \(NSA\)](#) may be detained for up to 14 days and there are provisions within the policing estate for people arrested in this way.

They are also entitled to receive visits from ICVs, however the ICVs themselves are specially selected to perform this role and must undergo additional training. We have one Norfolk ICV trained as a TACT ICV and they are on a rota with colleagues to provide cover for the whole of the Eastern Region.

During the year, there has been increased oversight of the TACT process through the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) who have delivered several on-line training sessions and seminars for both Scheme Managers and TACT trained ICVs.

All ICVs visiting TACT detainees will report nationally to the [Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation \(IRTL\)](#).



## Issues reported from custody visits

Following on from last year, ICVs continue to report excellent standards of care towards all the detainees held in custody. Serious matters are rare, but when areas of concern are identified they are addressed either by the ICVs themselves or by the Scheme Manager.

Some matters are out of the direct control of custody staff, such as staffing, gaps in service provision or having to detain patients detained under the Mental Health Act. However, such occurrences are reported back and addressed at a more strategic level.

Amongst issues raised this year were PIC cleanliness, access to translators and out of date food. Many requests were also negotiated such as medical attention, extra food & drink and resolving matters at home such as pet care. Importantly, the ICVs remind the detainees of their rights under law.

The Constabulary also continue to proactively offer reading material, showers and exercise positively addressing what is known as 'request culture' whereby those detained would only be offered entitlements should they ask.

## Police response

The vast majority of issues raised by ICVs are dealt with informally between the ICVs and the custody staff with many of the requests being arranged during the visit, however there are clear protocols should a matter not be resolved, or a wider thematic issue is discovered.

- > ICVs raise issue with Custody Sergeant.
- > Scheme Manager discusses issue with Inspector responsible for the relevant PIC.
- > Scheme Manager discusses issue with Chief Inspector for Custody.
- > PCC raises issue with Chief Constable through their governance and performance meetings.



# The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

ICVA are a Home Office and PCC funded membership organisation set up to lead, support and promote local independent custody visiting schemes. Norfolk continues to pay a [subscription for annual membership](#) to access a wide range of services as set out in their Mission Statement below.

**Lead** – ICVA provides leadership to ICV schemes in the UK, helping to define their aims and ensuring that schemes remain up to date in policing. As members of a number of nationwide groups, ICVA will use this platform to lead schemes on changes to the custody arena.

**Support** – ICVA play a crucial role in supporting local schemes and their managers and they provide effective, timely and consistent support to them. This covers a range of activities, but the aim is to ensure all schemes have the tools they need to be able to deliver effective oversight of detainees' rights, entitlements, dignity and wellbeing.

**Represent** – ICVA has an on-going national role to represent ICV schemes as an integral part of policing.

## The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

Schemes are asked to assess themselves against the QAF benchmarking standards which helps schemes to:

- > Reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, the legislation that underpins custody visiting.
- > Celebrate areas of strength.
- > Promote custody visiting and the achievements they have made.
- > Drive up performance of scheme.
- > Increase sharing of good practice and resources across schemes.

There are 4 levels of award – Code Compliant, Silver, Gold and Platinum with each level having a set criterion for schemes to provide evidence against.

In November 2023, the Norfolk Independent Custody Visiting Scheme was awarded the silver level, having achieved code compliance the year before. This award recognises the work and commitment of the volunteers, and undertaking the quality assurance process is also an opportunity to ensure all the previous learning and collaborative work has been adopted to ensure the Scheme is robust and continues to hold Norfolk Constabulary to account.



## Training & Collaboration

Training for new ICVs is carried out when they first join the scheme and utilises the training model provided by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA).

ICVs then remain under a programme of continuous professional development. Via their regular newsletter, they will receive notifications of any national developments around custody visiting as well as any legislative changes relevant to their role.

ICVA also continue to produce their 'Bitesize' training modules which focus on specific areas of custody visiting.

Although we have moved on from the pandemic, we retain our on-line training sessions which are popular and easily accessible for the ICVs. Held Spring and Autumn, a broad range of topics are covered, directly relating to custody as well as the wider criminal justice system.



## Collaboration, Regional Work and Scrutiny Panels

Our Scheme continues to work with that of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk and both schemes share similar working processes and policies due to the nature of the collaborative Custody Command. Norfolk and Suffolk share training opportunities for ICVs.

Norfolk & Suffolk ICVs have worked alongside the constabularies as part of an Independent Scrutiny Panel (ISP) since 2019. The current panel is recognised nationally as a model of good practice and continues to provide the police with detailed feedback around how they conduct strip searches, the use of safety clothing and the detention of children in custody after charge.

In addition to Suffolk, Norfolk also collaborates with regional colleagues from the East of England (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and from 2024, Kent). The Scheme Managers from these areas meet on a quarterly basis to share experience and best practice and the Norfolk Scheme Manager currently holds the Chair for this group.

The Scheme Manager also represents the Region on ICVA's National Expert Forum (NEF) which brings together expertise from across the UK to help advise and inform ICVA around themes, challenges and best practice.





## Want to know more?

Custody visiting continues to be essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held.

**If you would like to know more or are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor, please contact:**

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Manager  
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Norfolk  
Jubilee House  
Falconers Chase  
Wymondham  
NR18 0WW

**Telephone** 01953 424455

**Email** [icv@norfolk.police.uk](mailto:icv@norfolk.police.uk)

For more information on the role of ICVs or that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, please visit [www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk-pcc.gov.uk) or find us on Facebook at [NorfolkPCC](https://www.facebook.com/NorfolkPCC) or follow us on Twitter [@NorfolkPCC](https://twitter.com/NorfolkPCC) and [@NorfolkICV](https://twitter.com/NorfolkICV)

For more information regarding the work of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) please visit their website: [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk) or follow on Twitter [@CustodyVisiting](https://twitter.com/CustodyVisiting) or [@projectICVA](https://twitter.com/projectICVA)