



2020/21 ICV Annual Report



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COMMISSIONER**

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Independent Custody Visitors Annual Report 2020/21

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Welcome & Introduction

I am pleased to present this Annual Report highlighting the vital work undertaken by our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in Northumbria during 2020/21. This has been a very challenging year for the country, Northumbria Police and our excellent visitors.

Firstly I would like to record my huge thanks to our ICVs and custody staff for their excellent work and dedication in ensuring that those detained in custody suites in Northumbria were well looked after, safe and their rights and entitlements were provided.

In March 2020 the country went into lockdown and travel was restricted, this resulted in the ICV scheme being suspended to ensure the safety of our volunteers and those in custody during the pandemic.

The National Police Chief's Council and Home Office then classified ICVs as 'Essential Visitors' and recommended that Custody Visiting continue. In response to this, in May 2020 we introduced the reviewing of Custody Records as recommended by the Independent Custody Visiting Association which was undertaken by two of our visitors on a monthly basis. This provided myself with continued oversight of custody during this difficult period.

In the following months my office planned for the return of ICVs to face to face visiting and how this could be done in a safe manner. It was however evident that many of our long standing ICVs would not be able to return to visiting due to vulnerabilities or underlying health conditions. A recruitment drive was then initiated with 7 new visitors being appointed.

I wanted to ensure that face to face visiting returned as soon as practical and only where safety allowed therefore a specific arrangements were put in place to allow this to happen.

2021

Welcome & Introduction

Once all procedures were in place, a decision to return to face to face visiting was made and visits began again in October 2020. Visits were reduced to one visit per suite per month due to the reduced number of volunteers available, reducing the number of people within custody and to ensure the risks to volunteers were minimised. My ICVs have through these difficult times continued to give their independent views and feedback resulting in positive changes being made.

As you will understand this was a difficult year for many people but the work that our unbelievable ICV's have undertaken and the dedication they have shown has to be commended.

I hope you enjoy reading the rest of the report which includes some key facts about our scheme and the work of ICVs throughout the year.

Many thanks,
Kim McGuinness
Northumbria PCC



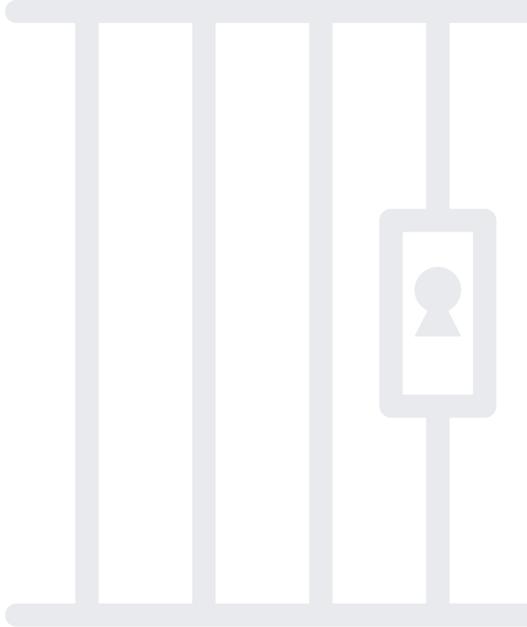
2021

OVERVIEW OF CUSTODY IN NORTHUMBRIA

We currently have 3 dedicated Police custody suites which is where most detainees are detained. These are located at:

- Forth Banks – 50 cells
- Middle Engine Lane – 40 cells
- Southwick – 28 cells

These suites cover a huge geographical area in Northumbria of 2,000 square miles, from the Scottish Border to County Durham and from the Pennines to the North East coast.



29,000

OVER 29,000 DETAINEES WERE
IN CUSTODY DURING 2020/21

We also have 4 Resilience custody suites which are only opened when one of the main suites are not operational or there is increased demand such as Christmas and New Year. These are located at:

- South Shields- 12 cells
- Etal Lane – 22 cells
- Bedlington – 20 cells
- Berwick – 6 cells

We also have cells that can be used at the two North East football grounds at Sunderland AFC and Newcastle United.

Stats of those detained in custody

There were over 29,000 detainees in custody during 2020/21 which is broken down by custody suites below:

12,524	Forth Banks	1,365	Bedlington (Resilience)
9,009	Middle Engine Lane	47	Etal Lane (Resilience)
4,068	Southwick	0	Berwick (Resilience)
2,100	Millbank (Resilience)		



ABOUT OUR ICV SCHEME

Number of ICVs

We currently have 18 Visitors split between three panels and each panel has a Panel Co-ordinator responsible for ICVs and custody suites within their area.

ICV Training

Training of our visitors is of the utmost importance to ensure that they are fully up to date with changing legislation and they have the tools to do their work. ICVs have continued to receive virtual training through the Independent Custody Visitor Association.

ICV Times of Visits

Our ICVs make visits to those in custody at varying times of the day and evening including weekends and public holidays. This ensures that they see a wide range of detainees that are brought into custody at vary times of the day and night.





OVERVIEW OF OUR VISITS

Visiting during Covid

During Covid 19 face to face visiting was suspended so visitors diverted to undertaking Custody Record Reviews Between May 2020 – September 2021 ICVs carried out 9 visits to police custody to undertake the custody record checks.

Between October 2020 and March 2021 (21) face to face visits were undertaken to the three main custody suites with 90 detainees visited. In comparison during 2019/20 ICV undertook 125 visits.

Return to face to face visiting

To ensure the safety of our ICVs a protocol was put in place to return to undertaking face to face visits during October 2020. ICVs attended a briefing session before visits commenced which focussed on the use of PPE and changes to the way visits were undertaken during the pandemic.

Of the 21 visits undertaken:

234 Detainees in custody

90 Detainees visited

76 Were unable to be seen

49 Were not in the sample of detainees that were visited

19 Refused to be visited

Points highlighted by ICVs

- Ensured repairs to cells or equipment were actioned promptly by the force where concerns were raised by ICVs.
- Ensured out of date detainee food or drinks which were immediately disposed of.
- Highlighted the positive use of PPE by staff and visitors and cleaning of custody suites. This included ensuring stocks of PPE were in place for use by those in custody.
- Identified issues with detainee blanket supply due to the quality of current blankets in use, this resulted in the force introducing a better quality blanket within suites.
- Ensured that female hygiene products were being offered to female detainees.
- Identified detainee masks being hung on the doors of detainee's cells and the potential hygiene risk that this could cause. This resulted in changes to force procedure with new masks being supplied to detainees after each use.



RECRUITMENT OF NEW ICVs

Many of our visitors could not visit due to Covid however we used this as an opportunity to recruit new visitors to ensure the scheme was able to continue at this difficult time.

We also wanted to ensure that our scheme was diverse and representative of the communities in Northumbria.

A demographic assessment of our current visitors was undertaken and we identified that a focussed recruitment drive would be beneficial to the scheme. We achieved this through advertising with our local Universities and volunteering groups.

We had lots of interest/applications to become an ICV, and appointed seven new members to the team. All new ICVs undertook induction training and completed visits with experienced visitors and are now integral members of the ICV scheme.

MEET ONE OF OUR NEW VISITORS

My current employment has supported me to develop a good understanding of the factors that may lead to an individual becoming involved in crime. My practice is underpinned by a strong value base and I wanted to apply this to a new voluntary role that was focused around promoting rights and wellbeing.



Volunteering as an independent custody visitor was an ideal opportunity as it is all about ensuring that individuals who are in custody are receiving appropriate treatment in line with their individual needs, the conditions that they are being held in are appropriate and they are aware of their rights and entitlements. Also, you have the ability to make recommendations regarding improvements that could be made.

I have carried out two visits so far, both of which have been very positive. The role is important and valuable for the reasons described above but, in addition, it also provides reassurance to the wider community. The experience so far has also helped me to increase my understanding of the processes within custody settings and how anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice is promoted within the setting.

TRAINING OUR ICVs



Training our visitors and support from ICVA

The Independent Custody Visitor Association (ICVA) provides leadership to Independent Custody Visiting schemes in the UK, helping fulfil their roles and ensuring that schemes remain up to date through regular training for ICVs. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic ICVA are regularly producing training that can be directly supplied to ICVs. These virtual training videos allow for ICVs to undertake training in the safety of their own home and continue their development in the role.

What training have ICVs received?

- ✓ ICVA Religion and Custody
- ✓ ICVA Race and Policing
- ✓ ICVA Equality and Bias
- ✓ ICVA Children's Concordat
- ✓ ICVA Children and Young People
- ✓ ICVA Anti-Racism Training

ICV Times of Visits

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LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021/22



Monthly ICV Updates

As panel meetings have not been able to take place during Covid 19, we have developed a monthly update for our visitors which provides an overview of custody, training materials and further relevant information provided by ICVA. These updates have been welcomed by visitors especially those that have not been able to visit during the pandemic.

Updated ICV Questionnaire

Following the HMICFRS inspection of Northumbria Police Custody, an updated questionnaire for ICVs to utilise on their visits will be developed. This will provide independent reassurance that any recommendations have been addressed.

2020/21

ICV Annual Report



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