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NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

2022-23



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WELCOME

I am pleased to present this Annual Report highlighting the vital work undertaken by our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in Northumbria during 2022/23.

Most importantly, I want to thank our excellent visitors for their support and dedication which makes a real difference to those detained and also provides me with valuable assurances that those detained in our custody suites are well looked after and treated well.

Throughout the year, we have worked in close partnership with the Independent Custody Visiting Association who have asked schemes to focus on increased training for ICVs in relation to racism and identifying any disparities in treatment of detainees. I am pleased to say that in Northumbria we were proactive in immediately including questions for ICVs on their visiting forms and no issues have been identified.

My team also focussed our annual training event this year on anti-racism and unconscious bias, which was held in partnership with fellow ICV teams from Durham and Cleveland PCC offices. This was an excellent day with input from specialists in this field and also the Independent Custody Visiting Association.

In Northumbria, we want to ensure that our ICVs have access to the best training possible and we have ensured that all bitesize training provided by the Independent Custody Visiting Association has been provided to our visitors, thus increasing their knowledge and skills.

Another area of focus for our ICVs last year and nationally related to dignity and respect of detainees and our ICVs will continue monitoring this area to ensure high standards are met by Northumbria Police.

WELCOME

Finally we will continue to work on our Quality Assurance Framework Assessment which is set by the Independent Custody Visiting Association as a means to confirm how well schemes are ran. I am pleased to say that Northumbria currently has the GOLD award and we will be aiming to retain this level again.

This is a fantastic achievement for our office but is also a commendation on the level of support our excellent ICVs provide.

I hope you enjoy reading the rest of the report which includes some key facts about our scheme, the work of ICVs throughout the year and the work we are undertaking to improve our scheme further.

Many thanks,



Kim McGuinness

Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner



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 2,000 square miles, from the Scottish Border to County Durham and from the Pennines to the North East coast.

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.

OVERVIEW

OF CUSTODY IN NORTHUMBRIA

Stats of those detained in custody.

There were over 27,000 detainees in custody during 2022/23 which is broken down by custody suites below:

Custody Suite	Detainees
Forth Banks	12,231
Middle Engine Lane	8229
Southwick	6048
South Shields (Resilience)	815
Etal Lane (Resilience)	22
Stadium of Light (Resilience)	24
St. James' Park (Resilience)	0
Berwick (Resilience)	0
Total	27,369

ABOUT

OUR ICV SCHEME

Number of ICVs

We currently have 15 visitors split between two panels and each panel is overseen by a Panel Co-ordinator responsible for ICVs and visiting custody suites within their area.

ICV Training

Training of our visitors is of the utmost important 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. ICV panel co-ordinators ensure that visits are made at varying times of the day with these visits being worked around volunteer's commitments.



OVERVIEW

OF OUR VISITS

Overview

Between April 2022 and March 2023 (76) face to face visits were undertaken to our custody suites with 307 detainees visited.

Of the 76 visits undertaken

- 825 detainees in custody
- 307 detainees visited
- 72 refused to be visited
- 277 were unable to be seen
- 169 were not in the sample of detainees that were to be visited.

Of the 76 visits undertaken

During their visits, ICVs will inspect a number of different areas including:

- That cells and toilets have been maintained and in working order.
- CCTV is present and working.
- Reasonable temperatures are maintained within the cells and centre.
- Any medical attention or medication required has been provided.
- Any detainee visible injuries have been explained.
- Female detainee hygiene concerns are addressed.
- Washing facilities and access to fresh clothing have been provided.
- The food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition.
- The detainee is satisfied with their treatment in custody.
- A reasonable period of time to rest has been given, if detained overnight.
- With the consent of the detainee, ICVs check the custody log to ratify the detainee's
- Account of their detention.

POINTS HIGHLIGHTED

& ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE YEAR

Points highlighted by ICVs and achievements through the year

- We wanted to ensure that everyone detained no matter their gender or ethnicity are treated equally which we refer to as disparities in treatment. To ensure this was not happening we refreshed our ICV questionnaires which now includes the collection of ethnicity and gender information and also any observations ICVs may have on disparity of treatment. ICVs have reported no concerns of any disparity of treatment relating to race or gender within our custody suites.
- Undertook a recruitment exercise to expand our number of ICVs resulting in five new ICVs being appointed. Our new ICVs will soon be undertaking their training including visits with experienced visitors.
- Specific focus by ICVs has continued throughout the year on ensuring detainee dignity in relation to the provision of both toilet rolls and the offering of washing facilities to detainees. This focus has resulted in fewer reports of issues being raised however there still have been incidents therefore ICVs will continue monitoring this provision inline with ICVA guidance.
- Following points raised by ICVs regarding the storage of religious items, the force have reviewed their religious items storage protocol and refreshed their religious texts within Forth Banks custody suite.
- Adopted the independent Custody Visiting Association Anti Racism policy which has now been included within our ICV welcome Pack.
- Took part in the Independent Custody Visiting Association national monitoring of the use of anti-rip clothing within custody. Positively Northumbria do not use this clothing in our custody suites.
- ICVs reported that some of the distraction items provided to detainees were in need of replacement which the force quickly actioned.
- Ensured repairs to cells or equipment were actioned promptly by the force where concerns were raised by ICVs.
- Working on our schemes ICVA Quality Assurance Gold Award with the outcome of the award expected in October 2023.
- Provided briefings to our ICVs regarding Operation Safeguard and putting measures in place for our ICVs to monitor these specific detainees whilst undertaking visits.

NORTHUMBRIA

FOCUS ON ANTI-RACISM & DISPARITY

Throughout the year, Northumbria ICV Scheme has worked closely with the Independent Custody Visiting Association to provide training to our ICVs in relation to anti racism, discrimination and unconscious bias.

ICV Regional Seminar focussing on Anti Racism and Unconscious Bias

In November 2022 we held a joint Regional Training Seminar for ICVs from Durham, Cleveland and Northumbria.

The event was hosted at Durham Police HQ which saw ICVs come together to receive excellent training in relation to race related issues, discrimination and unconscious bias. This training was delivered in partnership with ICVA and Rebecca Hemmings from Strawberry Words who is a national trainer focusing on race and diversity issues.

This training included unconscious bias and exploring racism and negative perceptions which will be extremely useful for ICVs in their role in ensuring that any discrimination is identifiable during their visits.

Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive Officer of the Independent Custody Visiting Association also attended to deliver a presentation on the work of ICVA during 2022 as well as future plans for the organisation.

It was an excellent event and also an opportunity for ICVs to come together and learn from each other which will only benefit all schemes moving forward.

MEET

OUR ICVs

Thomas Johnson

My name is Thomas Johnston and I volunteer on the Newcastle panel and have done so for the past 12 years.

I became a visitor because I was studying a legal degree and wanted to get experience of the justice system as well as use the

skills I have to give something back to the community. The appeal of the role is it ensures people who can be at their most vulnerable when in custody are treated with respect and dignity.

Since completing my degree I have continued with visits because I really enjoy them. One of the big drivers is the many people I do visits with. I enjoy the fact that visitors come from many different walks of life but when we do a visit we all share the same goal. To ensure that the detainees needs are met. I love that no two visits are the same. The mutual respect the custody staff have for our role is really important and allows you to be that critical friend.

I feel as a visitor I am able to make a difference. I feel my comments made on a visit are listened to and results in changes. In my time I have been able to highlight basic things such as not enough pillows available and when you attend the next visit you actually see that point is addressed and they do make a small difference to a detainee in the suite. I have also been able to highlight issues detainees have discussed with me at the time and custody staff are able to respond to it there and then to ensure if something isn't quite right it is addressed. This makes you feel positive leaving the suite that you have made a real difference.



MEET

OUR ICVs

Thomas Johnson

In my 12 years I have seen lots of changes to custody provision. Huge strides have been made, especially in the mental health sphere as well as wider health provision. We should expect the highest standards.

I am proud of the role I do and would say to any new visitor throw yourself into it with an open mind and you will get plenty from it. I hope I am involved for many years to come!



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.

ICVA Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

What is the QAF?

The QAF was developed by the Independent Custody Visiting Association to benchmark the level that ICV schemes are operating. Levels include code compliant, silver, gold and platinum awards.

In 2019 the Northumbria ICV Scheme received a “Gold Award” which was a brilliant achievement and showed that Northumbria have an excellent scheme in place.

During 2022 and continuing into 2023 we have continued to work hard as a scheme to obtain our “Gold” standard of visiting and carry on the great work we have undertaken.

What Training have ICVs received?

- Transgender Awareness
- Public Sector Equality Duty
- An Introduction to Racism within Custody and Policing.
- Physical Disabilities in Custody

LOOKING FORWARD

TO 2023/24

Continuing our focus on dignity in custody

Dignity of detainees is paramount, and this is an area that the Independent Custody Visiting Association wants schemes to focus on.

In Northumbria, our ICVs have been focussing on detainees being provided with items such as toilet roll without having to ask. Working with the Chief Inspector of Custody we are now seeing improvements through a reduction in reports however there is still work to do.



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