



**NORTHUMBRIA  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**

**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2023 – 2024**

**2023-24**

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# WELCOME

I am pleased to be presenting this report, however, as you will appreciate the period of this report covers the previous Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness. I am however proud to hear and comment on the excellent work that has taken place over the last year in ensuring those detained in police custody are well treated and their rights and entitlements upheld. The work of Independent Custody Visitors is vital, and I look forward to meeting you in person.

Most importantly, I want to thank our excellent visitors for their support and dedication which makes a real difference to those detained and 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 on the “back to basics” theme. This has been a helpful knowledge refresh for our longstanding ICVs and especially helpful to our newer members of the team.

My team also focussed our annual training event this year on ICV personal Safety when undertaking visits which was held in partnership with fellow ICV teams from Durham and Cleveland PCC offices. This was an excellent day with input from custody Inspectors who delivered the training produced by Sussex OPCC and the Independent Custody Visiting Association.

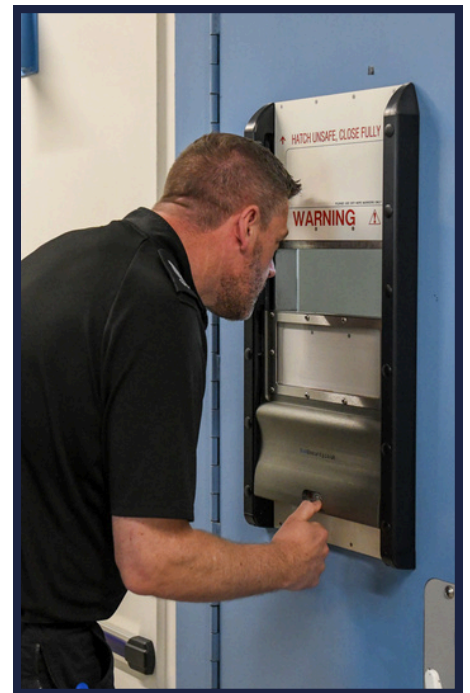
In Northumbria, we want to ensure that our ICVs have access to the best training possible and we have ensured that all bitesize training provided by the Independent Custody Visiting Association has been provided to our visitors, thus increasing their knowledge and skills.

# WELCOME

Finally, Northumbria took part in the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework where schemes must assess and provide evidence for a host of criteria under the themes of recruitment and training, managing volunteers, communications, holding the force to account, transparency and public reassurance and detainee welfare. Each area has several criteria for schemes to meet, the higher the level, the more criteria they need to meet in order to attain it.

I was delighted to hear that our scheme secured the Gold award, which showcases the excellent work of our visitors and our scheme as a whole. Our ICVs should be very proud of this so... Well done!

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.



# OVERVIEW

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## 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

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## OF CUSTODY IN NORTHUMBRIA

### Stats of those detained in custody.

There were over 27,841 detainees in custody during 2023/24 which is broken down by custody suites below:

| Custody Suite                 | Detainees     |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Forth Banks                   | 12,455        |
| Middle Engine Lane            | 7,772         |
| Southwick                     | 7,586         |
| South Shields (Resilience)    | 3             |
| Etal Lane (Resilience)        | 1             |
| Stadium of Light (Resilience) | 24            |
| Berwick (Resilience)          | 0             |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>27,841</b> |

# ABOUT

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## OUR ICV SCHEME

### Number of ICVs

We currently have 11 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 upmost 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

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## OF OUR VISITS

### Overview

Between April 2023 and March 2024 (88) visits were undertaken to our custody suites with 364 detainees visited.

### Of the 88 visits undertaken

- 1280 detainees were in custody
- 364 detainees visited
- 137 refused to be visited
- 504 were unavailable to be seen
- 275 were not in the sample of detainees that were to be visited.

### What do our visitors look for when visiting?

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

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## & ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE YEAR

### Points highlighted by ICVs and achievements through the year

- 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 in line with ICVA guidance. We have seen an improvement in this area through increased focus however there is still work to do.
- We have continued 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 continues to include the collection of ethnicity and gender information and 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.
- Successful in achieving the “Gold Award from the Independent Custody visiting Association.
- Ensured repairs to cells or equipment were actioned promptly by the force where concerns were raised by ICVs.
- Provided briefings to our ICVs regarding Operation Safeguard and putting measures in place for our ICVs to monitor these specific detainees whilst undertaking visits.
- Developing a new online reporting system for ICVs to be used during their visits.
- Delivered our annual seminar with a focus on Personal Safety training for our ICVs ensuring they are aware of risks and how to deal with situations that may occur in custody suites.
- Northumbria Police are planning a review of the custody estate with some older suites being decommissioned and new suites being brought online. The scheme panel co-ordinator has been involved in these discussion with the Scheme Manager to ensure visits will be undertaken to the new suites when they are in use.

# NORTHUMBRIA

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## FOCUS ON PERSONAL SAFETY TRAINING AND ICVA UPDATE / BACK TO BASICS THEME

Throughout the year, Northumbria ICV Scheme has worked closely with the Independent Custody Visiting Association to provide virtual training to our ICVs in several core areas. We held our Regional training Seminar in person with our colleagues in Durham and Cleveland.

### **ICV Regional Seminar focussing on Personal Safety and ICVA Annual Theme Update**

In March 2024 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 developed by our colleagues in Sussex OPCC and kindly shared with all other schemes.

The training consisted of 4 main elements which were:

- Awareness of the risk of entering a cell
- Steps to minimise risk in cells
- An overview of the dangers present in the communal areas of Custody
- Use of force law

This included advice, hints and tips on cell hatch safety, minimising risk on entering and exiting a cell and safety in communal areas of the custody suite. The training session also provided an overview of Use of Force legislation to help ICVs with a greater understanding of the personal safety training delivered to custody officers, while providing context for the use of force that they may witness on a visit, including such as leg restraints, unarmed tactics and or spithoods.

# NORTHUMBRIA

## FOCUS ON PERSONAL SAFETY TRAINING AND ICVA UPDATE / BACK TO BASICS THEME

As part of the annual seminar Jenna Wallop, Membership Engagement and Training Manager for the Independent Custody Visiting Association also attended to deliver a presentation on the work of ICVA during 2023/24 and a focus on the “back to Basics of ICVs” theme. This included training on areas such as:

- PACE clock
- Reviews
- Observations

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 ICV<sub>s</sub>

My name is Dominic and I have been on the ICV scheme since April 2023.

I was at a point in my life where I found myself sitting in the house looking for things to do and decided to use my spare time to volunteer. I wanted to use my time and skills to help others who may have fallen on hard times, were on the wrong trajectory or needed support to get back on their feet.

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.

Regardless of what someone has done, or how they have behaved, we all have fundamental rights and ensuring they are safe whilst in custody is my main priority. For some, custody is a regular occurrence and for others, it is a very daunting first time experience, so being able to be a reassuring, independent voice could help them and the police.

I also like to think that if I were ever in custody that there are people out there ensuring that my rights and standards were upheld. I would highly recommend the role of Independent Custody Visitor and the satisfaction this brings.



# 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)

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 2023 we were very happy to be awarded the “Gold Award” by the Independent Custody Visiting Association. This is the second gold award that the Northumbria Scheme has received in a row and is a testament to the hard work of visitors and custody staff.

### What Training have ICVs received?

- Neurodiversity
- Learning disability
- Immigration detainees
- Dealing with complaints during visits
- Personal Safety training
- Visiting and confidentiality
- Detainee rights
- Observation, reviews and rousals
- Menopause awareness

# LOOKING FORWARD

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## TO 2023/24

### Development of ICV Online Reporting

We are working to introducing online reporting for our ICVs. This will see ICVs utilising electronic phablets to input information when visiting detainees. It is hoped that this will allow a much quicker and smooth process of visits benefiting both ICVs and detainees.

### Increasing our Volunteers

In 2024/25 we will be looking to recruit further volunteers and also focussing one again on ensuring our scheme is inclusive and has a diverse range of people undertaking the role of ICV' that are representative of the communities we serve.

### Enhancing Questions that ICVs utilise when visiting young people

We will be working with our Force Custody Manager to enhance specific questions for ICVs to utilise when they visit young people in custody. We are aware that this is a daunting time for young people and want to ensure that they are supported whilst detained.



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# **ICV ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2023-24**